

Mary Welch
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THE
Tragical HISTORY
OF THE
Chevalier *de VAUDRAY*,
AND THE
Countess *de VERGI*.



Y R O I

THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM



The TRAGICAL
HISTORY
OF THE
Chevalier *de VAUDRAY*,
AND THE
Countess *de VERGI.*

In Two PARTS.

To which is annexed, A short NOVEL,

INTITLED,

The Inhumane Husband.

Done from the FRENCH.

By J. M.

LONDON:

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14

CHAP. I.

THE
YARD

CHAP. II.

THE
YARD

CHAP. III.





TO MY

Much-Esteemed FRIEND,

Mrs. P A R R Y.



*Ever was, Madam, and
ever shall be, of the
Opinion, that a gene-
rous Friendship, like
that wherewith You have ho-
nour'd me ever since I had first
the Happiness of your Acquaint-
ance, certainly, in Gratitude, calls
for some Return. Many are the*

A 3

Cour-

DEDICATION.

Courtesies which have been conferr'd upon me, both by You and Yours. The Debt I acknowledge; and shall use my Endeavours to acquit myself of so many unmerited Obligations.

Till some Occasion of such an Acquittance shall offer, I must intreat your kind Acceptance of the Trifle I now have in my Power to tender; not in any wise meaning it as in Part of Payment, but rather as a Remembrance, and in Consequence of a Promise I once made You, when, at your agreeable Seat, NEW-BOUNDS, I met with such generous Entertainment from the hospitable Lady your Mother, and the rest of that worthy Family.

When

DEDICATION.

When I gave that Hint, I intended You something more solid, and better adapted to your Genius : But meeting with this Historical Novel, at a Juncture when I had more leisure Time upon my Hands than I car'd for, I lik'd it so well, that, upon a second Review, I determin'd to naturalize it.

How I have succeeded, I must leave to the Judgment of those who will be at the Pains of looking it over : But, if You vouchsafe it a favourable Reception, and it affords You a few Minutes Amusement, the chief of my Ends are answer'd.

Several to whom I have lent the Original, and others who perus'd my Version in Manuscript, join

DEDICATION.

join with me in my Sentiments, that the Piece, for the moving and beautiful Incidents, and the natural Justness of the four principal Characters, is inferior to few, if to any of the Kind; and that, if touch'd over by a Masterly Hand, it contains what might make a shining Figure upon our Theatre.

The French Gentleman who wrote it, affirms, he was indebted for his Materials to the Burgundian Historians, and that the Bulk of the Story is Fact. And as for the little Tragick Tale which follows it, I met with it in a French Author, who delivers it for real History.

As it is to be hop'd, that among the fair Sex there are few to be met with of the Character of this malign

DEDICATION.

lign Dutchesse, who bears so great a Part in this History, who, by abandoning herself to her irregular and inordinate Passions, occasion'd such a dire Catastrophe ; so is it not to be doubted, that this Age is able to produce many Imitators of the virtuous but unfortunate Laura. Our uxorious Duke has too many of his own Stamp, to permit us to wonder at his being so easily imposed on by an artful Woman, who had shut the Door against all Sense of Virtue ; and as for the faithful, the generous Vaudray, how beautiful and irreproachable soever the rest of his Character may be, and how great soever the Tryal he was put to, yet, methinks, he merits some Censure for confiding a Secret of such Importance to a Person with whose

DEDICATION.

whose credulous, diffident Disposition he had Reason to be so well acquainted. And he ought to have been appriz'd of the Danger of trusting a Secret of such Consequence with an amorous Husband in his declining Years, whose Wife, (as he was very well assur'd) was pertinaciously bent to know the Bottom of it. But, instead of moralizing, I ought to leave You to pass your own Judgment.

I am sensible of the Error I commit, first, in offering a Novel to a Person whose Taste is turn'd a quite different Way; and, secondly, in tendering a Translation to one who is so nice and compleat a Judge of the Original: But I am, likewise, sensible of your Goodness; so I decline farther Apology.

DEDICATION.

I might now, and that without the least Partiality, say something of the personal Merit and Qualifications of the Person I have pitch'd on to patronize this little Tragick Narrative : But, as You know I have no Talent for Panegyrick, so I also well know, that should I attempt any Encomiums of that Kind, tho' ever so just, You would be so far from relishing that modish, fashionable Procedure, that You would, I fear, be apt to brand me with being in a fair Way to a State of Degeneracy, and of dwindling into what is no less my Aversion, than I know it to be Yours, I mean a Sycophant.

That I may not, therefore, be liable to so detested an Epithet, and to avoid putting you to the Blush,

DEDICATION.

Blush, I shall only do you the Justice to agree with the Sentiments of all who have the Honour of your Acquaintance; That if, when You can call Yourself a Mother, Your Conduct in that Character, proves answerable to what I know of you as a Daughter, a Sister, a Wife, and a Friend, I shall acknowledge, that I know not any Lady whose Example, on all these Accounts, as well as for her excellent Oeconomy, deserves more to be follow'd as a Model. I am,

MADAM,

Your most Obedient

Humble Servant,

J. M.



The TRAGICAL
HISTORY
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AND THE
Countess de VERGI.

P A R T I.



EVER was France threaten'd with a more apparent Ruin, than under the Reign of PHILIP AUGUSTUS, when the most formidable Powers of Europe, by a general Combination, seem'd to have plann'd out an infallible Scheme of dethroning that Prince, and of dismembering the French Monarchy.

B

JOHN,

JOHN, surnam'd SANS-TERRE (or Lack-Land) King of *England*, the implacable Enemy to that Crown, had so often experienc'd its Strength, that finding himself too feeble alone to engage it, he, not without Success, employ'd his whole Care, and us'd all possible Artifices, to bring over to his Party such Powers, as might be sufficiently able to maintain, and put in Execution his ambitious Designs.

The Emperor OTHO, to whom PHILIP AUGUSTUS had given too many considerable Causes of Complaint, eagerly embrac'd the Proposals the *English* made him, as a favourable Opportunity to revenge himself on the *French* Nation.

This Prince was Son to one of the King of *England*'s Sisters, by HENRY, surnam'd THE LION, Duke of Saxony. The Empire had been disputed with him by PHILIP, Brother to the late Emperor HENRY; and their mutual Pretensions having divided the Electors, some follow'd his Interest, and others, that of his Competitor, who was assisted by PHILIP AUGUSTUS both with Men and Money.

OTHO still retain'd in his Heart, the just Resentment which he had conceiv'd at this injurious Procedure, but never thought of taking any Revenge for the same, till after the base Assassination of that unhappy Prince

Prince who had been his Competitor for the Empire.

The Occasion appear'd to him, to be by so much the more favourable, because *France* had, at the same Juncture, Enemies sufficient to rend her in Pieces, and to open an easy Passage for him, to the very Throne of that Monarch.

FERRAND, Count of *Flanders*, and *REYNOLD*, Count of *Bulloin*, were in open Rebellion against their Sovereign, and had already set out with a considerable Body of Troops to attack him, which Forces the Emperor had incorporated with the numerous Army of *Germans* which he had brought with him.

The Dukes of *Lovain* and *Brabant*, and the Count of *Namur*, had still increas'd this formidable Army, by adding thereto the whole Strength of their respective States. So great a Power, and so many united Potentates, seem'd, in Appearance, to have been more than able, in a very little Time, to have swallowed up all *France*; and, in Effect, those Allies had beforehand, divided it among themselves: The King of *England*, who, by a powerful Diversion in *Guyenne*, kept Prince *Lewis*, the King's eldest Son, in play, was to have the greatest Share.

The numerous Army of the Confederates, lay incamp'd near *Valenciennes*: It consisted of upwards of One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Foot, besides a great Number of Cavalry. **PHILIP AUGUSTUS**, whose Courage was Proof against all Thoughts of Fear, was not in the least daunted or disheartened at the Prospect of that imminent Danger. His greatest Hopes and Confidence, were in the Nobility and Gentry, whose Valour has, in all Ages, been the chief Bulwark and Defence of the Nation. Nor was he deceived in that just and reasonable Confidence: For, with the utmost Emulation and Diligence, the Nobles and Chevaliers repair'd in Swarms to *Tournay*, which Place he had assign'd them for the general Rendezvous. The chief Peers of the Realm came at the Head of their Subjects and Vassals; of which Princes, the most considerable of all, was **EUDON**, Duke of *Burgundy*, who had given many very convincing Proofs of his superlative Valour in *Spain*, in the Wars which were there maintain'd against the *Moors*, and where he had been, for a considerable Time, in quest of Honour and Renown. In those Wars, he thoroughly improv'd his martial Disposition, and acquir'd a consummate Experience in military Affairs; upon which Account, he was highly distinguish'd by

by King PHILIP from among all the other Peers, by his shewing a particular Deference to his prudent Counsels, and by giving him the Command of the Rear of his Army.

Next to him, those of the greatest Account were THIBALD, Duke of *Lorrain*, HENRY, Count of *Bar*, ROBERT, Count of *Dreux*, JOHN, Count of *Ponthieu*, and many others: Yet all these Troops united, scarce amounted to the fourth Part of the Multitudes they were to encounter with: But the ardent Emulation they had to purchase Fame, and their great Fidelity and untainted Loyalty to their Sovereign, prov'd a sufficient Equivalent to counterpoise the vast Advantages the Enemy, by their Superiority of Numbers, had over them: And King PHILIP, that he might not give this Ardour Time to cool, decamp'd from before *Tournay*, in search of a Situation more convenient for his Cavalry and *Gens d' Arms*.

The Enemy, who imputed this Motion to nothing else but Fear, hastily broke up their Camp, and following the *French* close at the Heels, at last, overtook them in the Plain of *Bouvines*; and there it was, that PHILIP AUGUSTUS gain'd an immortal Name. EUDON, Duke of *Burgundy*, particularly signaliz'd himself in the most conspicuous Manner in that most important Battle. The Vanguard of the Army

having already past over the Bridge of *Bouvines*, that Prince, at the Head of a select Body of his *Burgundians*, was a great while left expos'd to the whole Fury of the Enemy : He sustain'd their utmost Efforts, with a Conduct and Intrepidity worthy of his high Reputation ; but the Count of *Bulloin*, laying hold of the great Advantage his Numbers gave him, after a most obstinate Dispute, at last broke through that Body of Troops.

It was then that the brave Prince was deserted by every one but *WILLIAM DE VAUDRAY*, one of the most valiant Chevaliers of his Court ; and, being surrounded by the Enemy, had undoubtedly lost his Life, had it not been for the heroick Valour and Resistance made by that worthy and faithful Subject, who, at the Expence of his own Life, preserved that of his Prince, and gave him an Opportunity of disengaging himself, and making his Retreat. But it was not long, before the Duke took a very bloody Vengeance for the imminent Danger he had been in, and for the Loss of his faithful Servant, the Chevalier *de VAUDRAY* : For the King having repass'd the Bridge, began a furious Charge upon the Enemies, whereby the Duke of *Burgundy* had Leisure to rally his dispers'd Troops, which he had no sooner done, but he faced about

about again, and, in his turn, routed REYNOLD, Count of *Bulloin*; who, in the greatest Precipitation and Disorder imaginable, was driven quite back to the very Battalion where the Emperor was in Person.

After this brave Action, Victory declar'd intirely for the King, and OTHO was oblig'd to betake himself to a shameful Flight. The Counts of *Flanders* and *Bulloin* were taken Prisoners by the Conquerors, and the greatest Part of the Enemies Army cover'd, with their breathles Bodies, the Field of Battle.

This Victory, so glorious and compleat, at once put an End to a War, which had apparently threaten'd the Crown of *France* with utter Destruction. The triumphant King was very liberal of his Praises, Acknowledgments, and Rewards, to all those noble Warriours who had been so opportunely serviceable to him upon this emergent Occasion ; but the Duke of *Burgundy* was more particularly honour'd with all the Distinction and Deference he had so worthily deserv'd; the King himself publickly acknowledging, that he was indebted to the Valour and good Conduct of that gallant Prince, for the greatest Share of his present Triumph.

He accompanied the King to *Paris*, and had a very distinguishing Part in the magnificent Reception the Citizens had prepar'd

for their victorious Monarch ; and with the King's Approbation and Consent, he was welcom'd into that City with Acclamations and other Honours, due as well to his illustrious Birth, as to his great personal Merit, and most important Services.

His Credit, with PHILIP AUGUSTUS, was become so very great, that the Countess of *Flanders* had recourse to him, and made her Applications to him to intercede for her Husband's Life ; and the Duke employed his Interest with his Majesty so effectually, that, upon his Account, and in Complaisance to him alone, the King recall'd the Sentence of Death, he, so deservedly, had pass'd upon the unfortunate FERRAND, and chang'd it into that of a perpetual Imprisonment.

This unhappy Count, had been expos'd to the utmost Derision, and the grossest Insults of the Populace ; which, in a particular Manner, made good the Prediction made to MAHAU his Mother, concerning him. She had been assur'd for a Certainty, That in the late War, wherein her Son had been engag'd against the King, that Monarch should be beaten down, and trampled under his Horses Feet ; and that FERRAND should make his Entrance into *Paris* in great Triumph : All which came to pass, but after a
very

very different Manner from what that Lady's Imaginations had flatter'd her with.

The Duke of *Burgundy*, after having receiv'd from the King all the Marks of Friendship and grateful Acknowledgments he could expect or desire, took his Leave and departed, in order to return to *Dijon*, his capital City. Upon his Arrival at his Court, he had no other Thoughts but those of enjoying the Pleasures which generally follow a glorious and honourable Peace. His first Care, was to gratify those, whose Courage and Merits had best contributed, and been most instrumental to the Trophies and Honours he had obtain'd. *CHARLES*, and *RAOUL DE VAUDRAY*, though very much in his Favour before, were the first who tasted the Effects of his Liberality, and of the Gratitude justly due to the Memory of the brave Chevalier *de VAUDRAY*, their worthy Father. As for *CHARLES*, the Duke gave him some considerable Employes, and kept him near his own Person, and bestow'd several honourable and advantageous Posts upon his Brother. These young Gentlemen, by their great Merit, soon made it appear, that they were no wise unworthy of their Prince's Bounty. *CHARLES*, whom, for Distinction sake, I shall call *VAUDRAY*, by his uncommon Qualifications, had, in a most distinguishing Degree, gain'd a general Applause.

plause and Esteem. He was scarce arriv'd at his twenty-sixth Year, and had already given frequent and indisputable Proofs of a singular Valour in several Places, and upon different Occasions ; and, at the Battle of *Bouvines*, he left bloody Marks of Vengeance for his Father's Death. He had a Soul great and generous ; a Genius lofty and penetrating, yet easy and free : His own admirable natural Parts were improv'd, and highly embellish'd by an excellent and liberal Education. As to the rest, his Person was amiable and agreeable, his Mien and Air, noble, and free from Affectation, and he was so extremely graceful, even in his minutest Actions, that it was impossible for any one to see him without conceiving a strong Love and Inclination towards him. He excell'd in all the bodily and martial Exercises, which were, at that Time, in use among the Nobility and Gentry of *France*. No Man sat firmer on Horseback, or rode with a better Grace than he, and from the Age of Sixteen, he had given many Proofs of his uncommon Strength, Agility, and Dexterity, in managing both the Sword and the Lance.

But he was not the only distinguishable Person in the Duke's Court. There were abundance of Noblemen and Chevaliers, who, by their singular Merits and their Gallantry,

lantry, were the Ornaments of their Country, keeping up the State and Dignity of their Families, and the Greatness of their Fortunes. The most illustrious and remarkable of these, were ANDREA DE BORGOGNE, Count of *Albon*, Brother to the Duke of *Burgundy*; HUGO DE VERGI; the Baron de CAMPLIT; JOHN DE BEAUFREMONT, Count of *Charnu*; GERARD, Baron of *Vienne*; THIBALD, Baron of *Neufchâtel*; JOHN DE CHALONS; the Barons de MAILLY de RAGNY; de CHOISEUL, de MAILLY; and several others.

But notwithstanding these noble Personages alone composed a very gallant Court, yet the Ladies who every Day shin'd there, were, without Dispute, its chief Ornaments. The Duke having buried *Dona Matilda de Portugal*, his first Wife, by whom he had no Issue, had lately espous'd ALICIA de VERGI. This Princess, was extremely beautiful, but withal, excessively imperious and haughty, and most violently govern'd by her Passions. Dissimulation and Artifice, were the favourite Foibles of her Mind: Her Heart was warm and amorous, and her natural Disposition to Love, was the Cause, that, without resisting, she gave herself up to that fatal Passion, which, in the End, prov'd her Destruction.

LAURA

LAURA *de LORRAINE*, Countess *de Vergi*, the Duke's Niece, who had been a Widow for some Time, was a most consummate Beauty. Her charming Person seem'd to have been modell'd by the very Graces themselves ; and there was never found before, in any single Beauty, a Complication of so many brilliant and enchanting Perfections, as were united in that lovely Princess. She triumph'd in all the Graces of an unblemish'd Virtue, without the least Mixture of Stiffness, Pride, or Affectation : Her Wit was exquisitely poignant and sublime, and her Conversation always free, affable, and easy. In a Word, there was not one Lady in the whole Court of *Burgundy*, or even in the more numerous and magnificent Court of *PHILIP AUGUSTUS*, that was any Way comparable to this matchless Countess. Since her Husband's Death, she had withdrawn herself from the Court, and was retir'd to one of her Estates about two Leagues from *Dijon*. So attractive were her Charms, that she had infallibly drawn the whole Court after her, had not the Apprehensions of disturbing a Retirement, of which she seem'd to be so extremely fond, restrain'd her Admirers from following her. Nevertheless the Duke and Dutchesse oblig'd her sometimes, to leave her Solitude, and to shine at Court, whenever any particular

Solem-

Solemnities happen'd, on which, it was thought requisite, that *Burgundy* should produce and expose to publick View, all its most brilliant Ornaments : But this fair Recluse always return'd, as soon as possibly she could, to that happy and delicious Abode, which was become the Center of her whole Ambition, and all her Desires.

Next to the lovely Countess, those, who, either for their Rank, or for their Beauty, were of the greatest Consideration, were *Madame de CHATENEUX, de SEAU, de MAILLY, de RAGNI, and Mesdemoiselles de la BEAUME, de TILLE, de BEAUFREMONT,* and a great Number of other most accomplish'd Ladies : And, in short, though this Court was none of the largest, or most populous in *Europe*, yet it had certainly the Advantage, over even the most numerous, splendid, and magnificent Courts, by the Gallantry and the Charms of the Persons it was compos'd of.

The Duke had been for many Years, past his Youth, and was now in his declining Age ; but, as he was so lately married to a second Wife, his great Magnificence, and his Complaisance to oblige the Dutches, was the Standard which was follow'd by all his Courtiers. The passionate Love he had for his new Spouse, engag'd him to invent innumerable Diversions, and sumptuous Entertain-

Entertainments every Day ; at all which, the God of *Love* was the principal Actor ; and certainly *Cupid* never establish'd the Throne of his Empire in so agreeable a Situation. The Hearts of all were inspir'd with the little God, nor was Reason, by an importunate, troublesome Severity, ever any Obstacle to the Soothings and flattering Hopes of those Votaries of that blind Deity. CHARLES *de VAUDRAY* alone, with an unpardonable Singularity, seem'd to be wholly indifferent and unconcern'd, amidst so many, whose Breasts were all on a Flame. This Insensibility of his, expos'd him to the Censure and Resentment of all those Beauties who had any Pretensions to his Heart, and render'd him obnoxious to the Rallery of such Gallants, who would not imitate him in an insensible Indifference, so inconsistent with his Years, and so little answering the Figure and Appearance he made ; but his Assiduity, and the indefatigable Care he took to please his Prince, seem'd to be his whole Concern, and only Occupation ; nor did his Sensibility seem to be otherwise bounded, than in studying the Means of giving him Proofs of his great Zeal, Love, and Fidelity. A Sentiment so rarely to be met withal, in a Court where Love and Gallantry are the reigning and predominant Passions, soon became as much the Subject of

of universal Admiration, as his Prudence and uncommon Merit had been before.

The Dutchesse of *Burgundy*, whose Soul was but too susceptible of the Impressions of Love, and whose penetrating Eyes and distinguishing Faculties, were superlatively nice and delicate, was no longer able to behold the amiable and attractive Qualifications of *VAUDRAY*, without being agitated with violent Emotions. His Employes gave him but too frequent Occasions of poisoning her Eyes with the resistless Charms of his graceful Mien and Person, and her Ears with the Poignancy and Eloquence of his Tongue. At first, she perceiv'd not the Impression his Presence made on her Heart, but confounded the Esteem she had for him, and which he so justly deserv'd, with those Sentiments which proceeded from a quite different Source: But, alas ! she was soon disabus'd from an Error of so great Importance to her Repose. With what Regret, with what Anguish of Soul, did this Princess discover the true Nature of those Emotions which caus'd her to be concerned, and to have an Interest in *VAUDRAY*'s Destiny ! Her fierce and haughty Heart, groan'd at its Defect, and was almost ready to burst. How many bitter Tears did it cost her, to find herself under the cruel Necessity of loving and sighing first ! For, in

in a Word, the respectful Deportment of VAUDRAY, breath'd nothing but an awful Veneration, and the abundant Zeal he had for the Consort of his Sovereign, his Patron, and his Benefactor : The closer Views she took, and the greater Attention she gave to all his Actions, the less could she perceive in him the least Spark, or Glimpse, of that Restlessness, that *Airembaraffe*, which Love alone creates and inspires. Her Virtue wrestled a long Time, with that merciless, tyrannick Flame, which prey'd upon her Heart. But, alas ! how unequal was the Match, and how vain and impotent the Efforts ! She soon lost Ground, and yielding up herself to the Discretion of that restless Passion which hurried her on, she made no Difficulty of sacrificing to her Inclinations, all she ow'd, both to her own Honour, and to a Husband who doated upon, and even ador'd her. Her Eyes were, for a considerable Time, the only Interpreters of the Sufferings of her Soul ; her Pride, rather than her Inclinations, with-held her from making a Declaration to which she was so violently press'd by the vehement Impulses of her Heart. Self-Love, Self-Opinion, or Vanity, easily persuaded this imperious, haughty Princess, that VAUDRAY, touch'd by her Charms and Beauty, must needs, at last, shew her, by his Actions, what his Respect

Respect and awful Distance forbad him to utter with his Tongue.

With this soothing Prepossession, she amus'd herself for some Days, a Prepossession so favourable to her amorous Sentiments, which, in spite of her innate Pride and Haughtiness, by Degrees, decoy'd her to make such Advances, that V A U D R A Y could by no Means have avoided discovering the Source from whence they proceeded, had his profound Veneration for the Dutcheis left him any Room to harbour the least Thought of any Thing, but what tended towards the officious Diligence he always us'd in serving and attending upon her in the Manner he was oblig'd to do by his Employs about her Person. But the little Desire, or Forwardness he express'd of being near her at other Times, besides those when his Duty requir'd his Attendance, and his small Attention, or Inclination, to make his Advantage of her obliging and distinguishing Behaviour to him, and the visible Advances she made him, caus'd such an Emotion, and so violent a Storm in her impatient Breast, that she imagin'd it might have been sufficient to wean her from any longer entertaining a Passion, which she began to judge unworthy of her : But it was not long, that she had the Satisfaction of enjoying that Thought, so consistent with her Duty, and so

so flattering to her Pride ; for almighty Love soon made her sensible, that all those Motions which seem in Appearance, to be contrary and opposite to his Power, are nothing in Reality, but the Effects of his Invincibility ; and, as a further Demonstration of his insuperable Power, he compell'd her to stoop to a Method of proceeding, to which she could never have imagin'd herself capable of submitting.

As this Princess was one Day walking alone in the Palace Gardens with VAUDRAY, who had the Honour of leading her by the Hand, she had not the Power to resist the Emotions she felt, nor to miss that favourable Opportunity. ‘ It is a long Time, VAUDRAY, ‘ said she, that I have sought an Occasion ‘ of discoursing with you in private. The ‘ Insensibility, and remarkable Indifference, ‘ of which you make Profession, gives too ‘ much Offence to all the Ladies of this ‘ Court, not to excite my Curiosity con- ‘ cerning a Conduct and Proceeding, which, ‘ without Dispute, conceals some secret ‘ Mystery. You are in Love, VAUDRAY, ‘ I have found out the Key to decypher ‘ those Sentiments, which, with such Art, ‘ you so carefully endeavour to disguise : ‘ But I will not be indebted to my own ‘ Penetration only, for the Knowledge of ‘ a Secret, which is rather due to my Good- ness

ness towards you, and the Obligations you
owe me upon that Score.

This Discourse, which VAUDRAY so little expected, put him into so great a Dis-order, that he was utterly at a Loss, how to behave himself, and blush'd to that Degree, that his Confusion appear'd visible in his Countenance. This the amorous Dutches observ'd, and interpreted to her own Advantage, ' Speak, said she, seeing he persist'd in an obstinate Silence ; shake off this unseasonable Constraint : My Friend-ship to you, will dispence with that respectful Distance you keep, and which is so very opposite to my Desires.' — ' I do nothing but what I ought to do, Madam, replied VAUDRAY, I am too sensible of the Duty I owe to my Princess, to be so presumptuous, as to dare to entertain her with the Affairs of my Heart. As to the rest, my Secrets are all bounded in endeavouring to find out the Means of making my Sovereigns sensible of the Veneration and Respect I have for them, and the Ardency of my Zeal in every Thing that concerns them.'

The Dutches, who was very little satisfy'd with this Answer, would, infallibly, have exacted from him one more positive, had the Duke, who had been looking for

for her, come hastily up to her, with that Air of Eagerness, with which that Prince's Presence always inspir'd him. VAUDRAY withdrew, out of Respect, and retir'd ; nor was he at all sorry for the breaking off a Conversation, the whole Consequence whereof he began to feel with Trembling. His Eyes were open'd on a sudden ; and, by the Dutches's visible Concern, and earnest Manner of expressing herself, he plainly discover'd a great Part of the Sentiments of her Heart ; and, from what Source that Concern proceeded. He reflected, with the greatest Anguish of Mind, that if the Idea he had conceiv'd was real, nothing in the World could prevent his falling under the most fatal Circumstances. As he had always made a firm and inviolable Resolution, never to be guilty of any Action that might stain his Honour, or cast the least Reflection upon his untainted Reputation ; in order to preserve that worthy Character, he, from thence forwards, very carefully avoided all Occasions, or Opportunities of renewing those dangerous Conversations, never more going into the Dutches's Presence, except when his indispensible Duty, or some particular Command of the Duke's, oblig'd him to be there.

The Penetration of that Princess was too great, and her Heart was too deeply concern'd in this new Manner of proceeding, to leave Room for the least Doubt, what were the cruel Motives of such a Conduct. She immediately concluded, that it carry'd along with it a Face of unpardonable Contempt, and that she was slighted ; a Thought she could not bear with any Patience. But as those Hearts which are brought under *Cupid's Yoak*, are inspir'd with Hopes and Fears, just as that little God pleases, so, after having for a while agitated that Princess's Breast with unsupportable Disquiets and Perplexities, he presented to her View some more soothing and agreeable Ideas. She flatter'd herself, that the Care VAUDRAY took to avoid being alone with her, was only the feeble and impotent Efforts of a staggering and half-vanquish'd Virtue ; and that this Gentleman, though quite charm'd, and in an Ecstacy at the Thoughts of that Happiness of which she had given him some Glimpse, yet, nevertheless, the Hopes and Prospect of what he might aspire to, had not so far dazzled his Eyes, as to cause him to pass beyond the Bounds of that respectful Distance, and the awful Duty which he had hitherto so worthily and so punctually

punctually observ'd, without violent Shocks and Agitations.

Her Favourite Lady of Honour, *Madame de LANTAGE*, who was privy to this her Passion, from the very first Moment in which she began to feel it, after having done all she possibly could to destroy it in its Infancy, was at last oblig'd to assist her in carrying it on. This dextrous and artful Confidante sooth'd and fortify'd her Hopes, by laying before her the great Advantages and the Glory, which the too happy VAUDRAY ought to hope for and expect in the Embraces of so charming a Princess : She insisted upon the Necessity of letting him know the Happiness which attended him ; a Happiness, to which he, without Doubt, never durst aspire, or even dream of ; and the Dutchesse, who was herself resolv'd to follow the Advice *Madame de LANTAGE* gave her, eagerly sought an Opportunity to put it in Execution ; and, in Effect, a few Days after, in Spite of all VAUDRAY's Precautions to prevent it, she found Means to explain herself to him in such a Manner, and that in the Presence of the whole Court, as to leave him not the least Room any longer to doubt of the Affair.

As the Dutchesse one Day return'd from walking, she was follow'd by a great Num-

ber of Ladies into her Apartment, where VAUDRAY was oblig'd to be in Attendance upon the Duke, who was there also. The Conversation was at first general ; a long Discourse having been held concerning a Hunting-Match, at which all the Ladies were to be present, dress'd like Amazons. The next Theme that was started among this illustrious Assembly, was the News at the Court of PHILIP AUGUSTUS, but that was soon laid aside ; for the Dutchesse, who never lost Sight of her principal Design, very adroitly turn'd the Conversation upon the Chapter of Love, and propos'd a Question of Gallantry. ‘ I would fain know, said she, addressing herself to the Duke, on which Side lies the greatest Obligation ; on that of the Gallant, who makes the Fortune of the Lady who is the Object of his Love, or of him who owes his own to the Person by whom he is belov'd, and thereby receives an infallible Proof of the Love he inspires ? ’

‘ For my Part, reply'd the Duke, I find not the least Difficulty in deciding this Question : It is so natural for us to delight in obliging, and more especially of those we love, that, in my Opinion, the Advantage lies intirely on the Side of him who lays the Obligation ; He acquires, from thence, a double Right over that

‘ that Heart which he desires to touch ;
 ‘ Gratitude and Acknowledgment cannot
 ‘ fail of making one value the Source
 ‘ from whence the Obligation comes.

‘ This Sentiment, answer’d *Madame d’ ALBON*, is indeed worthy of such a Prince as you ; but permit me to tell you, my Lord, that your high Birth and Fortune have put you out of a Condition of tasting the Sweetness of the contrary Proposition : I will readily agree with you, that nothing flatters a great and elevated Soul so much, as that Liberality and Generosity, which is so natural to it ; but, at the same Time, I maintain, that he, who receives the Obligation, must needs be more convinc’d of the Force of those Sentiments which he has inspir’d ; and, by so much the easier, as the more Love produces in our Favour, Things difficult to the common Sort of People, the more ought the Love of ourselves to be flatter’d for our Effort in that Condescension.’

Madame d’ ALBON, readily imagin’d, that *VAUDRAY*, by the precarious Situation of his Circumstances and Fortune, would have agreed with her in her Opinion ; and therefore, ask’d him what he thought of those different Sentiments ? ‘ Madam,’ said he, notwithstanding I find an infi-

nite Pleasure in owing all I have to my
 Prince's Bounty, yet, as to what concerns
 a Mistress, I have very different
 Thoughts ; and, as my Circumstances
 will permit me to offer her nothing but
 an unfeigned Love, so my Pride will
 never suffer me to pitch upon any, but
 one who has nothing but her Heart to
 bestow upon me.

The Dutches, who heard this, easily
 comprehended, that VAUDRAY had an-
 swer'd the Intent with which she had pro-
 pos'd the Question, much better than the
 Question itself, and therefore took up the
 Discourse again, and, with an inimitable
 Vivacity, said, ' I should scarce have gone
 about to decide the Question I myself
 propos'd, had the Example of the very
 Gods themselves left us any Room for
 Suspence how we ought to think upon
 this Subject. VENUS and DIANA plac'd
 their whole Felicity in ADONIS and EN-
 DYMION, notwithstanding the vast Di-
 stance between them : It is true, that
 ATIS, who had the same Sentiments as
 VAUDRAY has, was justly punish'd for
 refusing a Fortune which would have
 made him compleatly happy : I, for my
 Part, continu'd she, who am very incli-
 nable to lay Obligations upon People,
 find that CYBELA's Resentment, with

abundance of Reason, ought to fall upon the Head of an ungrateful Man, who put it out of her Power to exercise so noble and so generous a Sentiment.' As she had made an End of saying these last Words, by a very severe Look, full of Indignation and Resentment, she gave VAUDRAY to understand, that he might expect the Fate of the unhappy ATIS, if he presum'd to follow his Example.

As it began to grow late, the Company withdrew, leaving the Dutchesse to take that Repose, of which she stood so much in Need. She was no sooner left to her Liberty, but, addressing herself to *Madame de LANTAGE*, she said; 'Did you not take Notice, with what Care VAUDRAY evad'd the Idea which I would have had him comprehend? 'Tis done, and I am no longer able to exist under this cruel Uncertainty! I am determin'd to give him so clear an Interpretation of what Sentiments I have, and of what I suffer upon his Account, that it shall be wholly out of his Power to misconstrue the Meaning of my Words. If he answers my Passion, how exquisitely great will my Happiness be! If he proves ungrateful, with what Bitterness will the Remainder of my Life be attended! But I shall have, at least, the poor Consolation of dragging him

‘ him down the same Precipice, from which
 ‘ his Insensibility shall have cast me. I am
 ‘ fully resolv’d to-morrow to explain my-
 ‘ self ; let it be your Care to give him
 ‘ Orders to be here to receive my Com-
 ‘ mands.’

After this Manner it was, that the Dutchesse suffer’d herself to be hurry’d away by the Violence of that Passion which rent and consum’d her Heart : She no longer made any Scruple of betraying a Husband, whose Tenderness and Complaisance deserv’d a quite different Treatment. The Duke doated upon her with a Passion not to be express’d, and that good Prince would have thought himself compleatly happy, could he have had the Prospect of having Children ; but his being a little too far advanc’d in Years, almost depriv’d him of even the Hopes of a Blessing, which would have affected him in so sensible a Degree. Next the Dutchesse, the Person for whom he had the greatest Affection, and in whom he plac’d the greatest Confidence, was VAUDRAY : He, very deservedly, found in him so distinguishable a Merit, and a Zeal for all his Concerns so disinterested and so uncommon, that, without any Reserve, he consulted him in his most important and most secret Affairs : And VAUDRAY, on the other Side, would have sacrific’d his

own Life a Thousand Times, to testify his great Acknowledgments and Fidelity to his gracious Lord : But this happy Tranquillity was soon troubled by that unseasonable and tyrannick Passion which rag'd in the Breast of the Love-sick Dutches.

According to the Resolution she had taken, she caus'd VAUDRAY to be conducted to her Apartment, her Orders being so expressly positive, that notwithstanding all the Repugnance he had to obey them, he could by no Means avoid it. There it was, that, without Hesitation, or the least Apology, forgetting that modest Reservedness which ought to accompany her Sex, she made him an open Declaration of her Love, of its whole Progress and Violence.

' I know, continu'd she, that a Confession
 ' of this Nature is too strong, and too
 ' gross, to proceed out of the Mouth of a
 ' Person in my Station ; but by how much
 ' the greater is the Extremity of its being
 ' so, by so much the more ought your
 ' Heart to be touch'd with those Senti-
 ' ments which have forc'd me to such a
 ' Procedure : As to the rest, added she,
 ' with a more haughty Tone and Air, as
 ' it will be cruel and insupportable to me,
 ' so it will be extremely dangerous to you,
 ' to have been made privy to my Passion,
 ' without answering it as you ought.'

VAUDRAY,

VAUDRAY, utterly confounded and astonish'd at the Dutches's Discourse, and at her Manner of delivering her last Words, stood, for some Moments, with his Eyes fix'd on the Ground, in a Posture of one wholly irresolute and undetermin'd what Answer to make ; but that Frankness and ingenuous Sincerity of which he made Profession, would not suffer him to be long silent. After a considerable Pause,

' Madam, said he, I am most sensible of the inestimable Value of that Happiness you offer me ; a Happiness sufficient to render the greatest Monarch compleatly glorious ! But I, who am only born to serve you at an awful Distance, am constrain'd to think as the greatest of Misfortunes, That which would be esteem'd as the most sovereign Felicity to any other. This Sentiment is so deeply engraven in my Heart, that what Effect soever the Confession may produce, nothing can possibly ever stagger my Resolutions.'

The Dutches was highly incens'd at the noble Frankness of this Answer ; and, far from taking the Advantage of returning to her Duty from so rare an Example of Virtue, she abandon'd herself to all those inhuman Sentiments, that Rage and Resentment could suggest to her Imagination.

' Thou know'it my Weakness, said she,

‘ but never hope to triumph with Impunity over my Shame, into which thy unjust and ungenerous Refusal has precipitated me ! Thou shalt assuredly feel the Effects of my Hatred, since thou hast render’d thyself unworthy of those of my Love !

When she had said these Words, she retir’d, in the utmost Fury, into her Closet, violently flinging the Door after her, leaving VAUDRAY in an inexpressible Astonishment. Being somewhat come to himself, as he was advancing towards his Lodgings, overwhelm’d with dubious and perplexing Thoughts, dreading the fatal Consequences of that unhappy Adventure, he met the Duke, who was going to the Dutchesse, to desire her to take a Walk with him. That Prince would fain have had him gone back, but he excus’d himself upon Pretext of having some urgent Business to do. He had certainly much better have been a Witness to a Conversation which was going to be held at his Expence ; his Presence would have prevented the Dutchesse from filling the Soul of her credulous Husband with Suspicions. In Effect, the Duke had no sooner enter’d into her Closet, but that dangerous Enemy began to make most bitter Complaints against VAUDRAY, and did all she could to make the Duke comprehend, that the many Compliments and Arguments

ments of a profound Respect, which that faithful Domestick had always expres'd for her, had something in them of a tenderer Nature, than the bare Assurances of an ordinary Zeal.

‘ My Lord, said she, I would very willingly have conceal’d from you the Concern with which my Mind is agitated, as likewise the Insolence of your Favourite ; but, I protest, I have been under so great a Surprize, at the Thoughts of those Things he has been endeavouring to make me understand, that I was not able to keep within my Breast the just Resentment his Rashness has caus’d. You yourself might have read in his Countenance the Emotions of his Soul ; and tho’ his Presumption did not reach so far as to declare the Violence of the Passion he has for me, yet he said enough to explain his Thoughts, and to convince me of his Intentions.

The Duke, who was naturally inclinable to be jealous and diffident, was touch’d to the Quick with this artful Discourse : He began to reflect upon the Disturbance and Confusion which he had observ’d in VAUDRAY’s Looks, and made no Scruple of believing him guilty of a Treachery of the blackest and most unpardonable Nature. He knew not at first what Resolution to

take : Every Circumstance prompted him to a most terrible Vengeance : His Honour, attack'd in so sensible a Part ; his Confidence abus'd, and his Friendship basely betray'd, seem'd to have effac'd from his Heart all his past Goodness and Clemency, and to have chang'd his usual Moderation into Fury. ‘ Madam, said he, as he went away, you shall assuredly be reveng'd for this Affront, which equally concerns us both.

He was no sooner got into his own Apartment alone, but VAUDRAY's seeming Ingratitude, presenting itself to his Imagination in the worst and darkest Colours, inspir'd his Breast with such violent Emotions of Rage and Resentment, that he could scarce suppress them ; but, on the other Side, the long Experience he had of the Probity and honourable Character of that his Favourite, cast him into an Irresolution much easier to be imagin'd, than describ'd ; and having also had sufficient Time to reflect, that the Dutchess's Accusation was hitherto grounded upon no surer Foundation than a bare Suspicion, which, notwithstanding the plausible Appearance of its Probability, might still be thought dubious, he resolv'd therefore to be thoroughly confirm'd in an Affair which so nearly concern'd him, before he wholly gave Way

Way to the Dictates of his Passion. After having maturely weigh'd several Expedients, he was of Opinion, that the best Method he could take, was to make as if he had determin'd to banish VAUDRAY out of his Dominions ; not in the least doubting, but that, if this unfortunate Gentleman was conscious of any Guilt, he would, without Murmuring, acquiesce to that Sentence, which he was then about to acquaint him with by a Messenger, as well knowing, that an Offence of that Nature merit-ed a Treatment much more rigorous : But, on the contrary, if he was innocent, he would try all Methods to justify himself from that unworthy Accusation. With this Consideration the Duke immediately sent to the *Baron de Choiseul*, to let him know his Pleasure and Resolution concerning his Banishment.

VAUDRAY was nothing surpriz'd at this Order, though it gave him a mortal Affliction ; and he, without Hesitation, firmly determin'd rather to lose his Life, than to submit to a Sentence which would infallibly leave his Innocence unjustify'd, and always suspected. By the earnest Arguments and Intreaties he us'd, he prevail'd with the *Baron de Choiseul* to intercede for him with the Duke, that he might have the Liberty granted him to go and

cast himself at his Feet, and there justify himself, or die with Regret for having fallen under his Displeasure. The Baron, who was his intimate and sincere Friend, painted out VAUDRAY's Resolution and Despair to his Master so naturally, and in such pathetick Terms, that the Duke, who sought nothing more than to be press'd and importun'd upon that Subject, at last consented, permitting him to come into his Presence to plead his own Defence, and, if possible, to prove his Innocence ; but to intimidate him, he assum'd a severe Countenance, ready to reproach him with a Crime, the Truth whereof he still could not help doubting. During this Interval, VAUDRAY, who was fully perswaded that the Dutchesse had exasperated the Duke to the highest Extremity of Fury, was in the greatest Perplexity and Agony imaginable. With Despair he foresaw that it would be altogether impossible to attempt any Thing for his Justification, without turning all the Malignity of the Dutchesse's Accusation upon that Princeſſ herself : But then, at the same Time, to turn the Dagger's Point to his Prince's Heart ! To revenge his Wrongs in so mean, so cowardly, so ungenerous a Manner ! To create Confusion, and an irreconcileable Breach in a Family, where his Duty and his Gratitude
had

had engag'd him by such sacred Ties ! All these Reflections, so natural to a Man of Honour, oblig'd him to conceal an odious and detested Truth, and to leave his Justification to his Innocence alone.

Full fraught with this noble and generous Resolution, which he as resolutely maintain'd, he presented himself before his Prince. It was to no Purpose for the Duke to endeavour to raise his Resentment by uttering the most cruel and biting Reproaches ; nothing he could say being capable of shocking his intrepid Soul, or of staggering him in his glorious Determination. Almost drown'd in Tears, he cast himself at his Feet : ‘ I am guilty, my Prince, said he ; not of the base and unpardonable Crime of which I have been accus'd, but of not being so happy as to have found sufficient Occasions of giving you Proofs of my Sincerity, and of the Excess of my Zeal : Had you been intirely satisfy'd of the full Extent of my Integrity and unfeigned Fidelity, you would, doubtless, have yourself defended and justify'd me against all Suspicions, even against those which carry'd the Face of the greatest Probability. Well ! my Liege, continu'd he with the utmost Vehemency, punish me for the Disorder and Uneasiness my Misfor-

⁶ tunc

tune creates in your Soul ! In that indeed, I am truly culpable ; but cease, I beseech you, to reproach and accuse me of a Crime, the very Thought whereof makes my Soul shudder with Horror ! I never lifted up my Eyes towards the Dutchesse but with the profoundest Awe and Veneration ; and if my unhappy Destiny had ever made me conceive the least Inclination or Desire, too presumptuous for me to entertain, Death itself would soon have stifled it, and put an End to my Weakness, and my Confusion.'

The Duke could in no wise be satisfy'd with these Arguments, which appear'd to him so mystical and obscure : ' You still persist in abusing my Goodness, said he, in endeavouring to impose upon me by an Appearance of Virtue ; but I am too much injur'd and offended to be contented with Words, which may equally serve both for the Innocent and for the Guilty : I must have more convincing Proofs, or prepare yourself for the Effects of my just Resentment.'

' Yes, my Lord, I will satisfy you, reply'd VAUDRAY, since you put my Discretion to so cruel a Trial : I will ingenuously avow, that I love, I adore the perfectest Work, the Master-piece of Nature,

Nature, and have done so for several
 Years ; a lovely, charming, soothing
 Mystery conceals from the Eyes of the
 whole Universe, the most faithful, the
 most tender, and the most inviolable
 Flame the World ever produc'd ! ' Is it
 possible ? cry'd the Duke : Is it possible
 that you can entertain so violent a Passion
 for any but the Dutches ? Ah ! what
 would not I give to be thoroughly con-
 vinc'd of your Innocence ! Explain to
 me then this Mystery, which, in justify-
 ing you, will restore back to you all my
 former Love and Friendship ! ' Ah, my
 Lord ! interrupted VAUDRAY, what do
 you ask of me ! Exact not from me the
 Confession of a Secret, upon which the
 future Happiness of my whole Life in-
 tirely depends, and which would render
 me guilty of the basest and most un-
 generous Indiferetion in the World : Con-
 tent yourself, I beseech you, with know-
 ing, that I am engag'd to Her whom I
 adore, by such solemn, endearing, and
 inviolable Bonds, that nothing but Death
 itself is capable of breaking. ' But who
 will answer, interrupted the Duke, for
 the Truth of what you assert ? ' My Ho-
 nour and my Faith, reply'd VAUDRAY:
 Depend upon them, my Lord, and do
 not force me, I beg you, to commit a
 real

‘ real Treachery, in order to expiate an
 ‘ imaginary one, whereby, in endeavour-
 ‘ ing to wash away the Stain of a false
 ‘ Crime which has been laid to my Charge,
 ‘ I shall eternally forfeit my Honour, by
 ‘ violating and breaking thro’ the most
 ‘ solemn Ties in Nature.

Notwithstanding the Duke began to stagger, he would certainly have fully satisfy’d his Curiosity, but that one of his Attendants, at that very Instant, came hastily in, to inform him, that the Baron *de VIEVILLE* was that Moment arriv’d from the Count of *Flanders* about Affairs of the greatest Importance. ‘ Retire, VAUDRAY,’ said the Duke to him ; go, and prepare to make me the Discovery and Confession which I absolutely insist upon, and from which nothing shall excuse you : ‘ It is at that Price I set the Liberty I suffer you to enjoy : In the Interim, you may continue at Court : I will prevail with the Dutchesse to let you stay.’

The generous VAUDRAY, whom an Excess of Fortune’s Liberality had render’d unfortunate, departed to his own Home, full of Acknowledgments for the Greatness of his Prince’s Bounty, on one Hand ; but, on the other, overwhelm’d with Grief and perplexing Reflections. He, without Difficulty, foresaw, that the Dutchesse would never

ver stop at that her first Attempt ; nor did he make any Doubt, but that in the End he must infallibly fall a Victim to the redoubled Efforts of so very dangerous an Enemy ; and this tormenting Idea cast him into so violent an Agitation, that he could not take the least Repose. He pass'd the Night under the most cruel Doubts and Apprehensions ; and the next Day, when the Hour came which oblig'd him to repair to the Palace, the same agonizing Thoughts accompany'd him thither, without being able to discover in his Prince's Countenance, whether or no he still retain'd the same fatal Prejudice he had before. In a Word, after having perform'd all the Duties of his Charge, he retir'd to go home to his Lodging ; but in the Way he receiv'd a Letter from an unknown Person, who deliver'd it to him with so much Precaution, and made away with so much Haste, or rather Precipitation, that he could by no Means get Information from whence it came.

He made all the Haste he could that he might find out the Meaning of this new Mystery ; and was no sooner come into his Apartment, but, opening the Billet, he found these Words :

How yo shal p^t me to do now
Froen odd labotold minadhi lne lene
Dyngno ven bair off daib hlyg aswid
The
red

The BILLET.

YOU are come off triumphantly ; but don't hope to be always victorious : Resentment and Indignation are still preparing fresh Encounters for you : You will undoubtedly fall their Victim, except you have Recourse to Love to espouse your Interest : Think upon what you deserve, and from thence you may know how to guess at what you ought to fear : You are offer'd War or Peace ; take your Choice.

VAUDRAY had no great Difficulty to comprehend that this Billet came from the Dutches ; but the alternate Proposals which were made him therein, could be no Inducement to stagger him in the just Resolution he had taken. That Princess had made a Shew of being appeas'd, when the Duke had given her an Account of the whole Conversation he had held with the Person whom she was endeavouring to ruin. She had, at her Leisure, seriously reflected upon her hasty Proceedings, and with what Promptitude she had accus'd a Man she so ardently lov'd, and how little Prospect there was of touching his Heart by such cruel and inhuman Methods. She nevertheless was glad that she had not carry'd

her Accusation so far, as the Violence of her Passion would at first have forc'd her to do ; and now made no Manner of Scruple in imagining, that perhaps she had laid a wrong Construction upon VAUDRAY's Expressions, which, it was probable, might proceed purely from an Excess of Zeal and Respect.

The Duke, who desir'd nothing but to enjoy a calm and quiet Mind, was exceedingly pleas'd to leave her in a State of Sedateness and Tranquillity ; but the Confession VAUDRAY had made of his entertaining a secret Amour, would infallibly have rais'd another furious Storm in the Dutches's Breast, had not her Heart flatter'd her Imagination with the Ideas of his having made Use of that Artifice, purely to disengage himself adroitly from the too pressing Importance and Curiosity of the Duke : Nor could she avoid being sensibly touch'd at the Discretion he had shew'd, in Regard of a Person whose Proceedings deserve'd so little at his Hands. Her Soul was mollify'd with the Reflections of an Action so generous, and she immediately began to be inspir'd both with Compassion and Acknowledgments. But she did not long entertain those just and commendable Sentiments. She had flatter'd herself with fancying, that VAUDRAY would have taken
the

the Advantage of the many Opportunities she gave him of addressing himself to her in private ; but, on the contrary, having taken Notice of the small Effect her Billet had made upon his Heart, and the great Care he took to avoid her, she soon felt her former Fury beginning to revive in her Soul, and with so much greater Violence than before, as it was increas'd by some Sparks of Jealousy ; insomuch, that soon returning to her first revengeful Designs, she had Recourse to the basest and most unworthy Artifices imaginable, in order to bring them about. That Expedient which first presented itself to her Imagination, seem'd to her to be irresistably infallible : She doubted not, if she feign'd herself to be with Child, but that the Duke, charm'd and overjoy'd at that welcome News, would grant to the Impetuosity of her Desires, whatsoever she should pretend to long for, and that by these Means she could not miss of pouring down inevitable Destruction upon the Head of that ungrateful Man, who slighted and despis'd her Love.

It is very easy to imagine the Transports of Joy the Duke felt, when this subtle and deceitful Princess inspir'd him with so flattering an Expectation : His Passion for her increas'd every Moment, and his Heart, but too sensible of a Blessing he so little hoped

hoped for, redoubled its Complaisance towards her, and made him endeavour, by the most magnificent Entertainments and Diversions of Gallantry, to return her some Share of the great Pleasure she gave him. For a considerable Time nothing was to be seen but Sports and Festivals ; and every one strove, with the greatest Emulation, to manifest to the Duke how sensible a Part all his Subjects bore in his Satisfaction and Happiness ; and Vaudray alone, among all those Numbers, was constrain'd, purely through Decency and Good-manners, to join in that universal Rejoicing. He readily surmis'd, that this new Conception, this Breeding of the Dutches, whether real or counterfeit, was only the Forerunner of his Ruin : He was perfectly well acquainted with the Duke's Character ; and from the revengeful Temper, and the Malignity of the Dutches, he had great Cause to fear all Things. He had but too fatal Proofs of the Truth of these Conjectures ; and that dangerous Princess was too successful in the Advantage she took of the Increase of the Duke's Passion and Complaisance for her, and with which she had so artfully inspir'd him.

One Day, as the Duke was with her, pouring out his Protestations, that now nothing

nothing was wanting to compleat his Happiness, since he was upon the Point of having so dear a Pledge of her Love ;
 ‘ I can’t persuade myself, said she, with a
 ‘ languishing Look, that you can possibly
 ‘ have so extraordinary a Tenderness and
 ‘ Passion for me, as you take such Pains in
 ‘ endeavouring to make me believe : The
 ‘ Heir you are in Expectation of, is all
 ‘ that pleases you in me : Of this I have
 ‘ had but too plain Demonstration, by the
 ‘ small Regard you have express’d to the
 ‘ Complaints I some Time since made to
 ‘ you against VAUDRAY. That insolent
 ‘ Favourite of your’s triumphs over me ;
 ‘ and the Favour you shew that Minion,
 ‘ constrains me to suffer Affronts of so
 ‘ gross a Nature, and to seem satisfy’d,
 ‘ purely to pleasure you ; for, in short, I
 ‘ have no longer any Room to doubt of
 ‘ his presumptuous Temerity : His Eyes
 ‘ have too clearly confirm’d what he would
 ‘ utter with his Mouth ; but you have suf-
 ‘ fer’d yourself to be deluded by a few
 ‘ fallacious and deceitful Words, and have
 ‘ taken that fictitious and ridiculous Story
 ‘ of the imaginary Amour he invented, as
 ‘ a sufficient Excuse. For what Reason
 ‘ else, my Lord, should he have conceal’d
 ‘ from your Knowledge the real Object of
 ‘ this secret Passion, had not his Audacious-
 ‘ ness

ness inspir'd him to entertain that Passion
 for me? Is it naturally probable, that he
 could be able so to blind the Eyes of a
 whole Court, who are so attentive in ob-
 serving all his Motions, as to prevent the
 Discovery of his Affiduity and Addresses
 to that Person who was really Mistress of
 his Heart? Cease therefore, continu'd she,
 to let yourself be so grossly impos'd up-
 on, and make a thorough Examination
 into a Mystery, wherein your Honour is
 so nearly concern'd: Compel your Fa-
 vourite to name the Person he is in love
 with: If he complies, it will be easy to
 distinguish Truth from Fiction; but if
 he refuses, and continues obstinate in his
 Silence, you may be assur'd, that it is I
 myself who am the sole Object of his
 rash and presumptuous Passion.'

The Duke, during this Discourse, by
 examining within himself into the Prob-
 ability of every Circumstance, began to be
 so fully convinc'd, that he blam'd and con-
 demn'd his Weakness, in being so credul-
 ous as to give Ear and be led away with
 such fallacious Appearances. This Re-
 flection having taken a sudden Possession of
 his Mind, he said to her, ' You are intire-
 ly in the right, Madam; my too easy
 Blindness has led me into an Error: But,
 Heaven be prais'd, your Counsels will
 assist

' assist me to repair my Fault ; and I
 ' should, before now, have penetrated
 ' into this Secret which appears of such
 ' Importance to me, if you had seem'd to
 ' have been cur'd of your former Suspici-
 ' ons. I will force VAUDRAY to explain
 ' the whole Matter in very clear Terms ;
 ' and if he makes the least Hesitation in
 ' giving me that Satisfaction, he must cer-
 ' tainly expect to feel the most violent Ef-
 ' fects of my just Resentment.'

When this Conversation was ended, the Duke left her, and went to give Orders for making Preparations for a great Hunting-Match.

The Court-Ladies, at the Time appointed, were all there, habited like *Amazons*, and new Charms were added to their natural Beauties by the extreme Gallantry of their Dress and Equipage ; and the Nobility and Chevaliers upon that Occasion, emulated each other in the gallant Appearance of their magnificent Habits. In a Word, nothing could have added to the Beauty of this noble Cavalcade, or have render'd it more compleat, but the Presence of the lovely Countess de VERGI : But a slight Indisposition had confin'd her to her Country Retirement, nor was she sorry for having that Pretext to excuse her Absence.

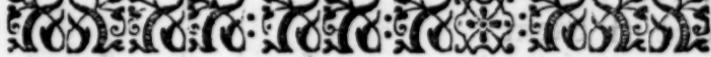
The whole Company were dispers'd here and there in every Part of the Forest ; but the Duke, that Day, forgot the great Love and Inclination he naturally us'd to have for that Sport ; and ordering VAUDRAY to follow him, he went to a Fountain-Side, where he sat down, and commanded that Favourite to do the like. His Air was extremely gloomy, and he appear'd to be thoughtful, with his Eyes full of Indignation and Choler ; nor was it very difficult for the unhappy VAUDRAY to comprehend, that he was going to stand the Brunt of some new Storm. At last the Duke broke Silence, and, in an angry Tone, fiercely said, ' It is not just nor reasonable that you should any longer disturb the Happiness and Repose of my Life. The Hopes I am in of soon seeing myself blest with an Heir, would set me upon the highest Summit of earthly Felicity, did not You, and you alone, poison all this Sweetness. You must take your Choice, continu'd he, elevating his Voice still higher, either to lose my Friendship, my Confidence, and perhaps your Life, or, without hesitating, to tell me the Name of the Person who is Mistress of your Affections, with the whole History of your Amour. My Honour demands that you obey me, since

‘ since a Suspicion can never be effac’d out
 ‘ of the Soul of a Prince, by any Thing
 ‘ but Blood or Sincerity. Speak therefore,
 ‘ and render yourself either worthy of my
 ‘ Friendship, or of my Hatred.’

‘ My Lord, answer’d VAUDRAY respect-
 ‘ fully, I would much sooner consent to
 ‘ lose my Life than to discover my Secret,
 ‘ if by my Death I could convince you of
 ‘ my Innocence. Your Goodness staggers
 ‘ my Constancy, more than the Horror of
 ‘ the cruellest Tortures can possibly do. It
 ‘ fills my Soul with Despair, to see that
 ‘ my unhappy Fate makes me the fatal In-
 ‘ strument of disturbing your Tranquillity.
 ‘ To You it is I owe my All ; and yet, by
 ‘ a false Representation, I appear guilty of
 ‘ a base Ingratitude. Well, my Lord, to
 ‘ convince you of my untainted Fidelity,
 ‘ of my Sincerity, and of my grateful
 ‘ Acknowledgment for your Bounties, I
 ‘ am going to make you a Declaration of
 ‘ the only Thing upon which the Happi-
 ‘ ness of my whole Life intirely depends :
 ‘ But if I may be permitted to exact from
 ‘ my Prince a solemn Oath, never to re-
 ‘ veal to any one whomsoever the Secret I
 ‘ shall commit to his Trust, I shall esteem
 ‘ that Condescension as the greatest of all
 ‘ the innumerable Favours he has so gra-
 ‘ ciously bestow’d upon me.’

‘ Fear

' Fear nothing, answer'd the Duke,
 ' impatiently, I swear by all that I esteem
 ' most sacred, that I will keep whatever
 ' you shall tell me, with an inviolable
 ' Secrecy.' ' Since you have the Boun-
 ' ty to give me such an Assurance, re-
 ' ply'd VAUDRAY, I am ready, my Lord,
 ' by a sincere and faithful Confession, to
 ' set your Mind at Ease, and to restore
 ' your Heart to its wonted Calmness.' At
 these Words, after having continued si-
 lent for a Moment or Two, to recal to
 his Memory some Particulars, he began
 his Relation in the following Terms.



The History of VAUDRAY, and the Countess de VERGI.

BY the Consequence of the Secret I
 am going to commit to your Trust,
 you will, doubtless, acknowledge, my
 Lord, what Confidence I have in your
 Generosity, and how sincerely I am de-
 voted to you; since, in so doing, I both
 forget and violate my most sacred Vows,
 and betray the loveliest and most finish'd

Part of Nature's Workmanship, who has not her Equal in the Universe, and purely to contribute to your Repose. Your Highness will be the more easily convinc'd of this Truth, when you are inform'd, that notwithstanding the tender Love and Friendship there ever was between my Brother and me, he is wholly ignorant of any Part of this sacred Mystery. Prepare yourself, therefore, if you please, to hear me make frequent Mention of several Publick Occurrences with which your Highness is perfectly acquainted ; but those Circumstances bear a Connexion so very necessary to my particular Adventures, that I cannot conveniently omit any one of them.

I confess then, my Lord, that I was acquainted with Love almost as soon as I was acquainted with myself : Your beautiful Niece, Madame DE VERGI, inspir'd me with a Sensibility of that soothing Passion, even in my very Infancy, and which has since grown to an Ardour the strongest and most inviolable that ever was.

At these Words, the Countenance of the Duke appear'd very much alter'd, shewing great Marks of Surprize ; but being unwilling to interrupt VAUDRAY's Discourse, he made Signs for him to proceed.

Pardon my Rashness, my Lord, continued he ; it has made me guilty of entertaining Thoughts too presumptuous and aspiring ; but the impetuous Emotions and Impulses of Love leave but little Room for Reflection ; and besides, I was so very young when I first began to feel the Force of this irresistible Flame, that That Consideration alone pleads my Excuse. Your Highness knows that the charming *LAURA de LORRAINE* was brought up in your Court, and had her Education with the young Princesses, the Count D' ALBON's Daughters ; and that from her Cradle she gave the most promising Hopes, by the extraordinary Perfections of her Person, and the uncommon Vivacity of her Wit. The Bounties with which your Highness was pleas'd to honour my Father, gave my Brother and me an easy Access into the Palace, and I had often the Honour of being admitted into the Company of the young Princesses when they were amusing themselves with Diversions agreeable to their Years. From those Frequentations, which my Non-Age authoriz'd, that Flame, which will never be extinguis'h'd but with my Life, began first to be kindled in my Heart. The young *LAURA* inspir'd me with Sentiments, of the Mean-

ing or Cause whereof I was perfectly ignorant. I was sensible of nothing but of the Pleasure I felt in being near her, nor knew I any Uneasiness but in her Absence. I will not, my Lord, make a Recital of the trifling Particulars of our Infancy, how charming soever their Ideas are still to my Memory, since they must, doubtless, prove tiresome to you ; but shall only inform you of those Passages which may be best capable of convincing you of the Excess of my Love. The little Assiduities I us'd in my officious Attendance upon my young Princess, seem'd to have made some Impression upon her Heart. With what Transports did I observe that she was not insensible to the Care I took to please her ! We pass'd some Years in this happy State : It is true, we had not Experience enough to distinguish the real Cause of the Sweetness of our innocent Sympathy ; but nevertheless, we tasted, without Disturbance or Constraint, the Pleasure of loving one another, and of being almost continually together. But, alas ! this agreeable Tranquillity was interrupted in the End, and I perceiv'd that my Soul began to be posseſ'd with Sentiments far more lively than those I knew before.

It was upon the Occasion of a great Turnament your Highness caus'd to be proclaim'd, that Love, by quite different Emotions from those I had already felt, made me thoroughly sensible that I was going to pay very dear for the Repose of the first Years of my Life. I was not full Sixteen, and I was flatter'd by many that I might hope for Success in those Exercises to which I had vigorously apply'd myself, as well to render myself the more acceptable to the beautiful LAURA, as inspir'd with the same Emulation which reign'd among several young Noblemen who were my School-Fellows and Companions. Your Highness had issued out an Order, That all the Cavaliers who intended to enter the Lists, should maintain and defend the Beauty and Perfections of their respective Mistresses. Every one strove with the greatest Emulation to out-do each other in the Preparations they made to appear with the utmost Magnificence and Splendor upon that solemn Occasion. My Father, who, rather out of a Point of Honour, than any other Motive, was likewise making ready to be present at that Festival among the rest, happen'd to be taken ill ; and notwithstanding his Indisposition was neither dangerous nor very considerable, it being, however,

Sufficient to hinder him from appearing in the Lists, your Highness chose him to officiate as one of the Judges of the Field. As for me, I was so unfortunate as to have no Encouragement to claim any Share in an Affair which would so agreeably have flatter'd my Inclination ; when some few Days before the Time prefix'd for the Turnament to begin, going into the Appartment where the young Princesses generally us'd to pass some Hours of the Day at their Diversions, I was extremely surpriz'd at my not finding LAURA there, and much more when I was told, that, contrary to her Custom, she would by no Persuasions, be prevail'd with to quit her Appartment. I ran thither with that Liberty which was then still permitted me, where I found her having in her Countenance such Tokens of Melancholy and Uneasiness as quite confounded and amaz'd me.

' What ails my charming Princess, said I ? what can occasion this Gloominess which I observe upon you ? Conceal it not from me, I beseech you ; for you are not ignorant that I would joyfully sacrifice a Thousand Lives to convince the lovely LAURA how much I adore her.'

At these Words the lovely Princess somewhat recover'd herself from that Thought-

Thoughtfulness which oppress'd her, and casting a gracious Regard upon me, said,
 ‘ I am well assur'd that I have no Friend
 ‘ more sincere than yourself : But I am
 ‘ very sensible, at the same time, that it no
 ‘ way lies in your Power to dissipate my
 ‘ present melancholy Humour. *Reason*
 ‘ indeed might do it ; but I protest, con-
 ‘ tinued she, with a most agreeable sort
 ‘ of Vehemency, I am yet too young to
 ‘ follow her Lessons.’ ‘ How exquisitely
 ‘ happy, my charming LAURA, said I,
 ‘ hastily, interrupting her, should I think
 ‘ myself, if you would eternally reject
 ‘ the unseasonable Counsels which that
 ‘ cruel *Reason* may give you to the Pre-
 ‘ judice of my Passion.’ The Princess
 was too much taken up with her inward
 Chagrin, to give much Regard to the
 Tenderness of that Expression. ‘ I should
 ‘ be scrupulous, continued she, of disco-
 ‘ vering to every one the Subject of my
 ‘ Concern ; but I repose so great a Con-
 ‘ fidence in your Friendship, that I will
 ‘ confess to you, without being any wise
 ‘ apprehensive of the Railery I am con-
 ‘ scious I deserve, that I am piqu'd in a
 ‘ very sensible Manner, that my imma-
 ‘ ture Years prevent any of the Cavaliers
 ‘ of our Court from undertaking to break
 ‘ a Lance in my Name, or for my Sake.’

‘ Well, my adorable Princess, said I, you
 ‘ must be satisfy’d : My Love will furnish
 ‘ me with some Means of contenting you.
 ‘ I will maintain against all Mankind,
 ‘ That You alone deserve the Prize for
 ‘ which any may have the Temerity to
 ‘ dispute to your Prejudice : Do me but
 ‘ the Honour to accept of me for your
 ‘ Cavalier ; trust me with that glorious
 ‘ Charge, and your Eyes shall be the
 ‘ Witnesses, that notwithstanding my want
 ‘ of Years, the Ardour of my Passion
 ‘ will enable me to maintain the Glory of
 ‘ so noble a Choice.’

Notwithstanding the Princess, visibly
 enough, appear’d to be touch’d with a
 Discourse which flatter’d her Desires, she
 obligingly refus’d my Proposal, with a
 Judgment, and in Terms, far above her
 Years ; and I had all the Reason in the
 World to be content, since all the Diffi-
 culty she made, ran only upon her Ap-
 prehensions of the Danger to which I
 was about to expose myself. Vanquish’d
 at last by my pressing Importunities, she
 consented to receive that Token of my
 Love, condescending to give me so delicate
 a Proof of the Confidence she repos’d in
 me ; but withal, extorted from me a fo-
 lemn Promise, that whatever Success my
 Enterprize should have, the Motive which
had

had engag'd me to undertake it, should most religiously be kept an eternal Secret from all the World. This Permission caus'd in me a Transport of Joy which seem'd to presage me the Victory ; and my Thoughts were then no otherwise employ'd than how, with all Privacy, to make the necessary Preparations for that Magnificent Festival. I was soon furnish'd with the Means ; for the Armour, and all the rest of its Appurtenances, which my Father had made for himself, being now become useless to him, serv'd very *a propos* to my Design : I being of good Stature for my Age, they all fitted me very well. I shall not, my Lord, enter into a Detail of the Particulars of a Festival, whereof all the Lustre, Splendor, and Magnificence, were intirely owing to your Highness's Direction and Presence. So, to proceed in my Narrative ; The Turnament began for a considerable while before I offer'd to appear, being determin'd to attack the Conqueror ; when, observing that not one of the Champions was able to withstand the Vigour and Good-Fortune of GERARD DE VENNE, I had the Temerity to advance, brandishing my Lance, into the Lists, and to bid him Defiance. I had Leisure enough to get engrav'd upon my Shield

the Representation of HEBE the Goddess of Youth, incompaſſ'd with Cupids, together with that of CY THEREA ſeeming in Despair for that Preference : Round about I had cauſ'd to be engraven in large Characters,

HEBE TRIUMPHS OVER VENUS.

GERARD DE VIENNE receiv'd me with that Address and Intrepidity ſo natural to him : But my Fortune would have it, that, in the Three Encounters we made, according to Custom, he could not gain the leaſt Advantage over me. Upon this, we fell to it with our Swords, which, likewife, according to the Laws of Turnaments, ought to terminate at Three Bouts : But my Antagoniſt, meeting with a Reſiſtance to which he had not been accuſtomed, went beyond the ordinary Rules, and engag'd me with an Animosity which had like to have prov'd fatal to both. I had the Good-Fortune to run him through the Thigh ; but he, finding the Weakneſs of my Armour in one Place, paſſ'd his Sword quite through my Body. I fell from my Horse into the Arms of my Father, who, with the other Judges of the Field, came running in to part us.

Would you noſt be ſtricken with Horror
at this?

Your

Your Highness may be pleas'd to imagine the Greatness of his Surprize, when having put down my *Bever*, he knew me. The Extremity of his Grief made an Impression even upon your Highness, and you had the Goodness to express a Concern. I was carry'd off ; and for a considerable Time my Life was despair'd of ; but at last the Excellency of the Cordials brought me to open my Eycs, and soon after I recover'd the Use of all my Faculties. Those about me, when they saw I was come to myself, would then fain have known the Motives of that my rash, and inconsiderate Undertaking ; but the Surgeons forbad them to make me talk 'till they had dress'd my Wound a second Time.

Will your Highness believe me, when I dare have the Assurance to affirm to you, that the terrible Condition in which I then was, caus'd me to be sensible of a certain Pleasure and Easiness of Mind far exceeding the Pain I felt, or the Danger with which my Life was threaten'd. I had given some Proof of my Courage, and, at the same time, made my lovely Princess sensible to what a Degree of Passion I ador'd her : My only Disquiet was, to know what Effect that Action of mine had produc'd in her Heart ; but it
was

was not long before I had that Satisfaction.

After the Surgeons had unanimously given their Opinions, that my Wound, tho' very dangerous, was not mortal, Yourself, my Lord, did me the Honour to come to see me, and even to express a Joy for the Hopes which had been given me of my Life. I still perfectly well remember, That, having first blam'd my foolish Rashness, You commended my generous Boldness, the sole Motive whereof appear'd to You to be an Emulation of acquiring Honour : The whole Court follow'd your Example and Sentiments ; however, the gallant Device with which I had adorn'd my Shield, occasion'd several Persons to hesitate at what Construction they ought to put upon it ; but I so positively, and with such seeming ingenuous Sincerity, maintain'd, that the Representation of HEBE was no other than an Allusion to my own Youth, that I at length perswaded the most incredulous. A few Days after, the young Princesses, who were brought up in your Highness's Palace, conducted by Madame D' ALBON, honour'd me likewise with a Visit ; and among the rest, came the beautiful LAURA. After the first Compliments, my Father being busy in enter-

tertaining the Countess D' ALBON in Discourse, the Princess LAURA approach'd my Bed-side ; and while the other young Ladies were agreeably amusing themselves with looking upon the Device of my Shield, she had an Opportunity to tell me, That she was very sensible of what I had done for her Sake. ‘ You have hazarded your Life, added she, but be assur'd, that my Acknowledgment is nothing inferior to the Gallantry of the Action you undertook with a View of pleasing me.’

‘ Most adorable LAURA, answer'd I, this Acknowledgment which you make me, is undoubtedly very soothing and flattering to my Imagination ; but I did not labour so much to obtain that, as I did to touch your Heart with still more tender Sentiments.’ ‘ I see plain enough, interrupted the Princess, with a Smile, that it is as difficult for you to moderate your Valour in the Field, as your Ardour in attacking the Ladies ; but, in a Word, VAUDRAY ; think of recovering your Health, in which I must own Myself to be somewhat interested : You have found the Means of making it not indifferent to me : Oblige me to say no more upon this Subject ; a longer Conversation will be equally prejudicial to your

‘ your Recovery, and to what I owe to
‘ myself.’ At these Words she join’d
the Princesses her Cousins, who for some
Moments longer amus’d themselves with
examining my Armour, and then de-
parted.

The Goodness of my Constitution, to-
gether with the Satisfaction of my Mind,
soon produc’d a very happy Change :
The Fever left me, my Strength return’d,
and in a few Days I found myself in a
Condition to leave my Bed, and, not
long after, my Chamber. My first Care,
my Lord, was to return your Highnes’s
Thanks for the undeserv’d Goodness
wherewith you had vouchsaf’d to honour
me ; after which, I flew to the Appart-
ment of my dear Princess. ‘ My charm-
ing LAURA, said I, throwing myself
at her Feet, I come to tender you an
Offer of that Life which your Good-
ness has preserv’d : You have render’d
it so glorious by employing it in your
Service, that it would be little less than
Inhumanity to destroy your own Work-
manship.’

‘ It would be happy for me, reply’d
LAURA, (obliging me to rise, with a
Sweetness in her Looks which quite
charm’d me) if in Effect I had contributed
towards your Recovery : I, too impru-
dently,

dently, caus'd you to expose your Life,
 not to avow to you that I see you again
 with Pleasure ; but I must still make
 you a farther Confession : The Danger
 into which I inconsiderately led you,
 would soon have prov'd equally fatal
 to us both, had you miscarry'd ; since
 I could not possibly have enjoy'd a
 Moment's Consolation for my having
 precipitated you into so evident a Pe-
 ril. My unwary Youth prevented me
 from reflecting on the Consequences of
 an Enterprize to which I, so rashly, gave
 my Consent : Yet, after all, you ought
 not to entertain the worse Opinion of
 me upon that Account, since it has fur-
 nish'd you with so good an Opportu-
 nity of giving shining Proofs of your
 Valour. 'Ungenerous Princefs ! reply'd
 I, it belongs to the Publick to applaud
 my Courage, if I have been so fortu-
 nate as to shew any : But grant me the
 Permission to tell you, that you are in
 the wrong to counsel me to have a Re-
 gard for any other Happiness of Life
 but where Love is immediately con-
 cern'd : That Deity alone was my
 Guide ; and I should have Reason to
 complain of *him*, if he should suffer you
 to take upon yourself what *he* forcibly
 compell'd me to do for your Sake.

These

' These Distinctions are of a very delicate Nature, interrupted LAURA, smiling ; but in Reality I owe you too much to leave you in Doubt of my Thoughts concerning your Conduct in this Affair. Know then, VAUDRAY, that I am neither ungenerous nor ingrateful ; the Action you have done, carries with it a Character so passionate, that in exposing to my View the utmost Extent of its Meaning, it opens my Eyes, and gives me Sentiments of which my want of Years, 'till this Moment, had prevented me from feeling the Consequences. I wholly depend upon a Prince extremely jealous of his Honour and Dignity, who undoubtredly designs me for some Person of a very eminent and distinguish'd Rank ; and tho', perhaps, I shall force my Inclination in so doing, I am yet fully determin'd to obey him. What then can you hope from a fruitless Passion ? I was born a Princess, and at the Expence of my Repose, and even of my Life, I ought to maintain that Character. Prepare yourself therefore, my dear VAUDRAY, to see me curb, to see me stifle an Inclination which I cannot help confessing to you, that even my

Cha-

‘ Character, my Honour itself, will scarce ever be able wholly to eradicate.’

As I was preparing to return an Answer to a Discourse so very obliging, and at the same time so cruelly destructive to my Passion, one of the Princess’s Female-Attendants came in to tell her, that your Highness wanted to speak with her in your Appartement. I took my Leave of the charming LAURA, being no less overwhelm’d with Grief, than I was replete with Love for, and Admiration of that adorable Princess. Those noble Sentiments she express’d, tho’ directly opposite to my Happiness, increas’d my Passion. I found them so agreeable to those she ought to entertain, that I sigh’d as much for not being able, reasonably, to condemn them, as I did at the Thoughts of the Obstacle they were likely to be to my future Repose.

However, my Liege, the Princess, from that Day, began to avoid me; she insensibly debarr’d me from those Liberties, which, ’till then, my Youth had permitted me to take. I perceiv’d it, without having it in my Power to blame her Conduct; for, from thence-forward, I was condemn’d to sigh without complaining.

Two Years elaps'd under this insupportable Constraint, my Eyes being all that while the only Interpreters of my Heart ; and I sometimes read in those of my adorable Princess, that she was a Partaker of the Pain impos'd on us both by a too rigorous Duty : But, alas ! how weak and imperfect a Consolation was that to a Heart inflam'd like mine ? At the same time, to compleat my Despair, my Father, without consulting my Inclination, took a Resolution to marry me to **BLANCHE de BEAUFREMONT**, who might with Justice have pass'd for the most beautiful Lady of the whole Court, had not the enchanting **LAURA** been its principal Ornament. Your Highness was consulted upon that Affair : You gave your Consent : Nor was it 'till that Moment that I knew the least Syllable of the Yoke which was intended for me ; and then my Father mention'd it to me as a Thing entirely resolv'd upon, and which was to be concluded in a very few Days. Judge, my Lord, how great must be his Surprize to find me give an absolute Denial to accept of the Advantages he offer'd me, together with so agreeable a Person as **Mademoiselle de BEAUFREMONT**. It avail'd him little to lay before me the Honour of such an Alliance, and the just Resentment

ment an illustrious Family like that, would have at my Refusal : I remain'd immovable in my first Resolution, notwithstanding the paternal Authority he endeavour'd to exert, in order to bring me to a Compliance. He went so far as even to prevail with Your Highness to let me know the Part you condescended to take in my Concerns : Your Highness did it with Candour and Lenity : The Princess herself had likewise the Cruelty to press me to it ; but methought, upon that Occasion, I observ'd that her Words betray'd the Sentiments of her Heart. In answer to those pressing Sollicitations, I so vigorously alledg'd my Want of Years, and the little Relish I had for a marry'd Life, that I had not only my Father's Indignation to encounter with, but likewise the sharp Resentment of the Lords of the House of BEAUFREMONT. I made flight of all, valuing myself upon having given to my dear Princess a fresh Proof of my Passion for her.

I soon perceiv'd the happy Effect my Resistance had wrought upon LAURA's Heart. I met her one Day coming from the Appartment of your Highness's most Excellent Consort. ‘ VAUDRAY, said ‘ she, somewhat hastily, as she pass'd by ‘ me, I am truly sensible of the whole ‘ Merit

Merit of what you do upon my Account ; but what will you be the better for making Sacrifices of which the only Advantage you can expect to reap, is a fruitless Pity ? You refuse a tempting Fortune for a Person who can never possibly be a Shareer with you of any thing but your Misfortunes.' Having said this, she left me so precipitately, that I could not return any Answer. I remain'd quite transported at those obliging Expressions, and I bless'd, a thousand Times, the Firmness of my Resolution, which had occasion'd them : But a Croud of melancholy Reflections soon made me sensible, that my Princess, as tenderly sensible of my Suffering as she express'd herself to be, could not, like me, oppose absolute Commands, and that it could not be long before some happy Rival would deprive me of those slender Remains of Hope which alone kept me alive. In effect, that cruel Moment came, and I felt all the Tortures which I had but too plainly foreseen. LAURA's Beauty, which was hastening apace to arrive at that Point of Perfection it has since attain'd, brought me most formidable Rivals. The Count DE VERGI, encourag'd by the Honour he enjoy'd of being related to your Highness, declared himself
 her

her Admirer, and by his Assiduities to please my dear Princess, and the magnificent Feasts he made for her, convinc'd the World of his Pretensions.

I was quite Thunder-struck at this fatal News : It reduc'd me to Despair, in spight of the distant Glimpse of Hope I had conceiv'd. The bare Idea of seeing what I ador'd in the Arms of another, quite surmounted my Constancy. But, Great God ! how was my Torture increas'd, when I heard it rumour'd Abroad, that the Count DE VERGI had obtain'd your Highness's Consent to address the Beauty for whom I sigh'd ! It was then that my Fury grew outrageous ; a thousand Horrors oppress'd my Mind, and I form'd several violent Resolutions against the Count's Life : But Reason, and Love itself, soon made me comprehend, that by entertaining such desperate and vain Thoughts, I should not only injure the Reputation of the Object of all my Vows, but likewise I should be nothing the happier, since it was more than probable that another would reap the Fruit of my Despair.

The Princess, who perceiv'd my Perplexity, had the Goodness, by favourable Looks, and some obliging Expressions, to endeavour to restore a Calm in my tempestuous Breast. The Satisfaction of finding

ing that Goddess of my Heart interest herself in my Torments, somewhat abated the Impetuosity of my first Agitations, and the Arrival of the Counts *de BAR* and *de BRESSE*, help'd still more to moderate my Anguish.

Those Princes appear'd at Court with a Magnificence suitable to their Rank, and their Design of attempting to bear off the Prize at that great *Horse-Race* which the Count *de VERGI*'s Passion for the Princess *LAURA*, caus'd him to exhibit. In the Count *de BAR*'s Retinue, were the Sieurs *de LENONCOUR*, *ROCHE-COURT*, *GIUSTINE*, *SOMIEURE*, *St. BLAIN*, &c. The Count *de BRESSE* brought with him the Barons *de la BAUME*, *MONTREVEL*, *de SALLE*, *de ALBIGNY*, *de COUPER*, and several *Chevaliers* of Note.

Your Highness must needs remember how much the Count *de BAR*, tho' otherwise not disagreeable in his Person, had of Ferocity and Savageness in his Countenance, and that the Physiognomy of the Count *de BRESSE* had something which denoted the Perfidy and Deceit of his Heart. In a Word, those Princes, with those Qualities, both of them fell in Love with *LAURA*, and gave splendid Demonstrations of their increasing Passion. This

powerful Diversion gave me a Satisfaction which a Lover seldom enjoys upon the Discovery of his Rivals. I made no doubt but that they would do their utmost to ballance the Count *de VERGI* in his Pretensions. In effect, they neglected no Expedient, no Assiduity, in order to obtain the Preference. Feats, Balls, and Tournaments, became daily Entertainments, and those Three amorous and magnificent Rivals strove with all imaginable Emulation which of them should carry off the contested Prize. In short, nothing was to be seen but Gallantry : I alone, plung'd into an Abyss of Chagrin, solitarily sigh'd away my unhappy Hours, with Horror at the Idea of what Misery was to attend the Remainder of my Days ; for I made no Doubt, but that one of my Three Rivals would be chosen. I was so grievously tormented with these new Ideas, that, unable to resist the racking Uneasiness they gave me, I resolv'd to write to my Princess ; which I did in these Terms.

B I L L E T.

IDY, divine Princess ! Every Thing abandons me except that Tyrant Love, who will conduct me to the Grave : Hope, which alone supports the Unfortunate Lover, is,

is, for ever, divorc'd from my Heart. Command me, then, to put an End to a Life so insupportably wretched ; or permit me, at your Feet, to receive Orders to live.

I put this Billet in my Pocket, with a Design to deliver it to the Princess ; and that very Evening an Occasion offer'd. A magnificent Ball was appointed in the Palace, and the Liberty every one had to go in mask'd, gave me likewise the Liberty of approaching my dear LAURA. I had the Good-Fortune to make myself known to her, and to prevail with her to receive my Billet. She took it so adroitly, that none perceiv'd her ; and under Pretext of reading some Verses which the Count *de BAR* had procur'd to be made for her, I observ'd that she read what my Love had dictated ; after which, she had the Goodness, by Looks full of a languishing Tenderness, to let me see that she was not unmov'd at my Sufferings.

However, I retir'd in a cruel Incertitude of what Answser I might hope for. I waited for the next Day with an extreme Impatience ; and that Day, which I flatter'd myself would have afforded me some Consolation, had like to have cost me my Life. I expected, that at the

Count *de VERGI*'s Treat, who, in his Turn, had prepar'd a sumptuous Feast for the Princess, I should, by the same Means, receive my *LAURA*'s Commands ; and with this View I repair'd to the Palace mask'd, and as meanly disguis'd as possible, in order to conceal myself from the Knowledge of all but of her to whom I design'd to make myself known.

But she was always so surrounded by an officious Crowd of importunate Admirers, that I could by no Means make her take Notice of me. When I was quite out of Hopes of being able to get near her amidst that tumultuous Assembly, I thought it my best Way to retire to a certain darkish Passage which led to her own Appartment, hoping that, as she came by, I might have an Opportunity to learn her Pleasure.

I had been there some Moments reflecting upon the Cruelty of my Destiny, which oblig'd me to seek Darkness and Solitude, while my Rivals enjoy'd the Liberty of making publick Profession of Sentiments which could not possibly stand in Competition with the Ardour and Tenderness of mine, when two Persons in Masks, not perceiving me, came near the Place, where I stood close up in a Corner, to discourse more

commodiously. As I easily knew them to be the Counts *de BAR* and *de BRESSE*, and it is natural for every jealous Lover to have a Desire to penetrate into the Secrets of his Rivals, I was charm'd at my not being discover'd. The Count *de BAR*, assuming the Discourse with some Impetuosity, said to the Count *de BRESSE*,

' Our Destinies, my Lord, are undoubt-edly alike, and the Duke of BURGUNDY has, I do not question, acquainted you with the Preference he gives to *de VERGI*: I know not what Effect his unworthy Refusal has produc'd in your Soul: For my Part, I find myself trans-ported with the most violent Rage, and wou'd immediately have given bloody Proofs of my Resentment, had I not expected more favourable Sentiments from the Person for whom we equally languish: But I have just discover'd a Secret; and find that her Ingrati-tude to us, surpasses the Duke's In-justice: I heard that weak Princess give *de VERGI* a Rendezvous, ordering him to be to-morrow Night, at Eight, in the new *Grotto* belonging to the Pa-lace Garden.'

' Ah ! my Lord, interrupted the Count *de BRESSE*, what do you tell me ! By this cruel Discourse you but too

‘ too much confirm the just Suspicion
 ‘ rais’d in my Breast upon Account of
 ‘ a Billet which, some Moments since,
 ‘ I took up as it fell from LAURA’s Bo-
 ‘ som, while she was dancing with *de*
 ‘ VERGI. Here, continued he, giving
 ‘ him the fatal Paper, read the Con-
 ‘ firmation of our Misfortune.’ The
 Count *de BAR* took it, and drawing to
 a little Window, the only Light there
 was near that Place, he read pretty loud
 what I distinctly heard, and is still fresh
 in my Memory ; the Words were these.

B I L L E T.

*M*y Heart would willingly calm all
 your Agitations ; but what can it
 do for your Ease ? Mean while, moderate
 your Disquiet : Your Rivals have more
 Cause to complain, and are much more to
 be pitied than you : And to compleat your
 Satisfaction, to the utmost of my Power, rest
 assur’d, that *I* partake of your Pain, and
 that, for your Sake, *I* am about to take a
 Step which ought for ever to convince you
 of my Goodness to you.

It is impossible for me to express to
 your Highness what I felt at this fatal
 News : The Counts seem’d little less un-

easy. They were preparing to go on with their Discourse, which would, doubtless, have inform'd me of their pernicious Designs, if at that very Instant they had not perceiv'd that I observ'd them. The Count *de BAR* immediately advanc'd fiercely towards me ; but as I would not be known, I made off, and got into the Hall among the Company, where he soon lost Sight of me.

I went Home overwhelm'd with a deeper Despair than, in my whole Life, I had ever felt before, fully perswaded that I had discover'd a Piece of the blackest Treachery in the World. Without the least Hesitation I resolv'd to be at the Place of my happy Rival's Rendezvous, and I pass'd the Hours which preceded that inauspicious Moment, in inexpressible Impatience. At length, when I thought it was Time for me to fly to the fatal Spot, where I was to be Witness of my Wretchedness, I took By-Ways, and was oblig'd to hide myself in a large Honey-Suckle Bush. From the Distance I was at from the *Grotto*, I conceiv'd, with Chagrin, that I should lose Part of my perfidious Princefs's Discourse ; but I was not at Liberty to chuse for myself, the Bush in which I lay conceal'd being the nearest to that Place.

Judge,

Judge, my Lord, what must be my Reflections while I was waiting for the coming of my imagin'd faithless Princess. It is certain that Grief is not mortal, since I surviv'd those cruel Moments. The only Thing capable of keeping me alive, was, the firm Resolution I had taken to pierce the Heart of my triumphant Rival, and with the same Dagger with which I should have sacrific'd him to my just Fury, to have put an End at once to my Life and Misfortunes.

My Thoughts were deeply plung'd in these dismal Ideas, when, casting my Eyes towards the Palace, I beheld the cruel LAURA, with a precipitate Pace, advancing towards the *Grotto*. This Impatience of hers to be first at the Rendezvous, redoubled my Rage, and I am still at a Loss to comprehend how I had so much Command over myself as to resist the extreme Inclination I had to quit my Hiding-Place, and load her with the most injurious Reproaches. But the excessive Desire I had to hear what she could say to *de VERGI*, detain'd me. The Princess enter'd the *Grotto*, and not finding the Person she expected, sat down on a green Bank, and fell into a profound Thoughtfulness. I observ'd all her Motions, as much as what Light the

Moon gave, would permit, and my Jealousy perswaded me, that the little Haste my Rival made, caus'd the Uneasiness in which she seem'd to be: But I had not Time long to bend my Attention that Way; for I soon after saw *de VERGI* come in, and immediately cast himself at her Feet. She made him rise, with an Indulgence that wanted little of depriving me of the Use of my Reason; and, to compleat my Despair, I could hear little or nothing of their Discourse, as I had well foreseen. My Ears being of no Use to me, I employ'd my Eyes; and, from the least Gestures, I imagin'd Consequences, which I believ'd Certainties; and the Prepossession of my Soul was such, that I fancy'd *de VERGI* was returning to *LAURA* a Thousand grateful Acknowledgments for her Goodness to him. But at last my Patience absolutely abandon'd me, when I beheld that happy Lover rashly fixing his presumptuous Lips upon one of the fair Hands of my Princess.

I protest to your Highness, that when I saw that, I no longer doubted of my Ruin; and as I was preparing to execute my fatal Design, I saw enter the Grotto, where what was so contrary to my Passion, was transacting, two Men, Sword in Hand, whom I presently knew to be the Counts

Counts *de BRESSE* and *de BAR*. They suddenly fell upon the Count *de VERGI*, and, before he had Time to put himself in a Posture of Defence, they dangerously wounded him. However, as he was one of the bravest Men of his Time, he soon recover'd himself, so as to make a gallant Resistance to the Attack of his base Assassins. Notwithstanding I had Time enough to consider that I had it in my Power for ever to rid myself of those three Rivals, without appearing in the Affair, I made not a Moment's Hesitation to follow the Dictates of Honour and Generosity, and successfully put myself by the Count *de VERGI*'s Side, and had the Happiness to assist him so effectually, that those unworthy Princes betook themselves to a precipitate Flight. The Count, having no more Enemies to encounter, turn'd towards me, and to testify his Acknowledgment for the seasonable Assistance I had given him, said, ‘ I happily
 ‘ reap the Advantage, VAUDRAY, of the
 ‘ indefatigable Care you take to follow
 ‘ the Princes every where : In the mean
 ‘ while, without examining into the Mo-
 ‘ tive, my Sensibility - - - - ’ He was un-
 doubtedly going on with his Discourse ;
 but his Weariness, and the great Quantity
 of Blood which he had lost, having

weaken'd him all at once, he fell down senseless at the Feet of the beautiful LAURA, who, for her Part, was so seiz'd with Astonishment and Fear, that she had not the Power to get away. I approach'd her trembling, ‘ Princess, said I to her, What shall I do to serve you, and to save the Life of the happiest of Mortals ? Let us not lose such precious Moments ; and by the Efforts I make upon myself, know that I was not unworthy of a better Fate.’ As LAURA was about to return me an Answer, we saw advancing towards us a great Number of People whom the Noise of Swords had brought thither. ‘ Fly, Madam, said I ; it is proper that I alone should be Witness to *de VERGI*’s Happiness.’

The astonish’d Princess was preparing to make Use of my Advice ; but your Highness, follow’d by Part of your Court, arriv’d where we were. You have since avow’d, that you was never so surpriz’d in your Life : To find the Count *de VERGI* weltering in his own Blood ; to see the Princess, half dead, in a Place, and at an Hour, so extraordinary ; and to meet me, at the same Time, with my Sword drawn, standing by them ! All this, at first, seem’d incredibly incomprehensible

ble to your Highness : But Anger immediately succeeding your Surprize, you made no Scruple of believing, that it was I who had put the Count in the Condition wherein you found him, and you, perhaps, suspected the virtuous LAURA of holding a criminal Correspondence with me. In a Word, my Lord, you commanded her to retire, with a Severity which pierc'd me to the very Bottom of my Heart, tho', at the same Time, I thought her faithless.

I cast myself at your Feet, in order to give you an exact Account of all that had been transacted ; but the unhappy Appearances which oppos'd our Justification, prevented your Highness from giving Ear to my Words.

By your Highness's Order, I was dragg'd to Prison, while the Count *de VERGI* was carry'd to the Palace. I perceiv'd, with Grief, that my Safety wholly depended upon his ; it being he alone who could witness for my Innocence. Shall I ingenuously confess, my Liege, what were my Thoughts under these wretched Circumstances ? The Satisfaction of being justified for a Crime laid to my Charge with such convincing Appearances of Truth, seem'd to me nothing in Competition with the mortal Chagrin of owing

that Justification to my Rival. Added to this, I felt all the Bitterness of this unfortunate Adventure ; and that the Princess, in excusing herself, in regard to the Intelligence she might be suspected to hold with me, must be oblig'd to confess what what she had done for the Count *de VERGI*.

“ Alas ! cry’d I, doubtless the Duke, who
 • has already approv’d of that Prince’s
 • Passion, will be highly satisfy’d to find
 • the Princess answer it ; he will certainly
 • unite those Lovers, and I shall be
 • declar’d innocent, only to be Witness
 • of an Union so fatal to my Eternal
 • Repose.

I pass’d the Night in these racking Reflections ; but, alas ! all that I had foreseen was confirm’d in the Morning. My Brother, whose Affection to me is very great, was the first who, by your Highness’s Order, came to release me from my Confinement. From him I understood, That some Hours after the Count *de VERGI* had been put in Bed, he, having recover’d his Speech, had told your Highness all that had pass’d in the Grotto, and that he had not only justify’d the Princess and me, but likewise had given you an Account of the Assistance I gave him, in Terms that made me blush.

He

He likewise told me, that the unworthy Counts had precipitately left the Court, and that *de BAR*, in the Confusion he was then in, had left, upon the Table in his Closet, a Billet, which fell into the Hands of SOMIEURE ; and as that Cavalier, who would not accompany his treacherous Lord, happen'd to find it, he presently suspected it to belong to LAURA, as knowing her Hand by having seen some Verses of her Writing, and had sav'd it; as imagining it to have been the Cause of all those Disorders.

But, my Lord, admire my Good-Fortune upon this Occasion : My Brother, very happily for me, was an intimate Acquaintance of SOMIEURE : that Cavalier, who had less Access at Court than he, deliver'd to him the aforesaid Billet, in order to return it to the Princess LAURA : I desir'd my Brother to let me see it, and, upon Perusal, I soon found it to be the same that had given me so much Uneasiness.

He made no Difficulty to suffer me to charge myself with the Delivery of the Billet to the charming LAURA, after which he conducted me, according to your Highness's Order, to *de VERGI*'s Appartment, where you then was. Your Highness, doubtless, remembers, that, in the most
obliging

Obliging Terms, that Prince thank'd me for the Service I had done him, and seem'd full of Regret for the indifferent Recompence I had receiv'd for it. Your Highness likewise vouchsaf'd to express your Concern for what small Injustice had been done me, and to bestow far greater Praise on my Action than it deserv'd.

I withdrew, well satisfy'd with the Count's Acknowledgement. Every one thought it very probable, that, walking in the Garden, I came to the Grotto upon hearing the Clashing of Swords.

However, your Highness heard what was whisper'd abroad to the Princess's Disadvantage ; and in order to put a Stop to those Rumours, you determin'd to unite her for ever to the Count *de VERGI*, as soon as he should have recover'd his Health, which was speedily hop'd for, his Loss of Blood being his greatest Harm, and what alone had caus'd his Faintnes.

When I heard this melancholy News, I was just ready to expire with Grief ; but as I expected it, and had foreseen it as an unavoidable Stroke, I arm'd myself with all my Constancy : I feign'd an Indispōsition for several Days, that I might prepare and fortify my Reason against so inevitable a Misfortune. But, alas !

alas ! how fruitless were my Precautions ! It little avail'd me to represent to my Imagination, that my extreme Sorrow was neither just nor reasonable ; it was wholly out of my Power to master it ; and the Idea of LAURA's Infidelity, which I incessantly oppos'd to the Violence of my Passion, was too weak to triumph over it.

In a Word, being no longer able to resist the terrible Disquiet with which my Soul was agitated, and being unwilling to manifest any Signs of the Torment I endur'd, I resolv'd to quit BURGUNDY, and to end my Life in the first Place where War would furnish me with an honourable Opportunity.

Having form'd this Resolution, I began to prepare to put it in Execution. I privately got my Affairs in Order, and furnish'd myself with Money sufficient for a long Journey. When the Morning of the Day which preceded that of my Departure, came, I thought it requisite, the better to conceal my Design, to make my Appearance at the Palace : But that was no other than a vain Pretext wherewith I endeavour'd to satisfy my Reason ; for, in reality, I was dragg'd thither by the secret Pleasure of once more seeing my dear Traytoress.

Accordingly I went to Court, and there, in every Quarter, I met the Confirmation of that fatal Union which was to prove my Ruin. After some Stay, I was about to return, without even the poor Consolation of having a Sight of the Princess ; when, passing by her Apartment, I saw her coming out. She was alone ; and the Despair which was visible in my Eyes striking those of that lovely Tyrant, she stopp'd me. ‘ VAUDRAY, said she, in a low Voice, you fly me : A false Appearance deceives you, while I am the most wretched Princess upon Earth ! ’ ‘ Too ingrateful LAURA, reply’d I, fixing my Eyes on hers, I cannot doubt of my Wretchedness ; I have been an Eye-Witness of my Unhappiness ; but I shall soon deliver you for ever from an Object whose Presence would incessantly reproach your Perfidy ! ’

I had much ado to utter those last Words, so much was my Speech obstructed by Heart-breaking Sighs and Sobs, which almost suffocated me ; and with some small Satisfaction I perceiv’d that LAURA was no less touch’d than myself, by the Floods of Tears which trickled down her beautiful Cheeks.

“ VAUDRAY,

‘ VAUDRAY, said she, I had taken a Resolution to avoid any private Conversation with you, as one of the greatest Dangers that could attend me ; but my Honour is concern’d to disabuse you of a Suspicion which gives me no small Uneasiness. I can easily convince you of my Innocence : Would to Heaven I could as easily conceal from you my Weakness ! Come, therefore, this Evening to my Appartment ; I’ll take Care that we shall not be interrupted : But remember, that it will be the last Meeting that my Duty can ever permit me to grant to your Love.

At these Words the Princess left me ; and I beheld in her Eyes so much Tenderness and Sincerity, that my Fears were all dissipated in a Moment. I felt re-kindling in my Breast some Sparks of those Pleasures which had been so long banish’d from thence ; and, in a Word, I return’d to my Father’s House so different from what I had been when I last left it, that I scarce knew myself.

It is needless for me to tell your Highness with what Impatience I waited for the Hour in which I was to go to the Princess : Those who have ever felt Love, are too well acquainted with the different Effects that irresistible Passion produces.

Never-

Never Day appear'd to me so tedious ; but at last the wish'd-for Night arriv'd, and I flew to the Place of my happy Assig-nation. LAURA, who, to disengage her-self from an importunate Crowd of Visi-tors, had feign'd a violent Pain in her Head, the better to colour it, was lain down on a Couch, and in that Posture she receiv'd me. Her Head-Attire was a negligent *Disabilité* ; and notwithstanding all the rest of her Apparel was answera-ble to that Simplicity, she never ap-pear'd so beautiful in my Eyes as she did then. Several of her Women-At-tendants were amusing themselves in her Appartement upon a Piece of Embroi-dery. ‘ Come hither, VAUDRAY, said she, ‘ when she saw me enter, I want to con-sult you about something that concerns ‘ me.’ At these Words she commanded me to sit down by her, the Distance being great enough to hinder any of her Gen-tlewomen from overhearing us.

‘ It is now in vain for us to flatter our ‘ Imaginations. I can no longer avoid ‘ giving my Hand to the Count *de VERGI* ; ‘ and notwithstanding the Sentiments I ‘ have for you, we must part for ever. ‘ A tyrannick Duty drags me from my ‘ Inclinations : But, alas ! such is the fa-tal Destiny of Persons of my Rank ; ‘ their

' their Hearts are never consulted ; they
 ' are ordain'd for Victims, and as such
 ' are forc'd to undergo whatever Yoke
 ' is impos'd on them ! The Duke gives
 ' me to *de VERGI*, and I must, of Neces-
 ' sity, bid an eternal *Adieu* both to your
 ' Love and your Company. Prepare
 ' yourself, therefore, to stand this Shock
 ' with Constancy, and think upon what
 ' my Honour and Character exacts from
 ' me. I am sensible of the Excess of
 ' your Passion, I know your Suspicions,
 ' and it is in order to satisfy both the one
 ' and the other, that I have run the Ha-
 ' zard of suffering you to come hither,
 ' notwithstanding the Terms upon which
 ' I stand with Monsieur *de VERGI*. You
 ' ought to be satisfied with this alone ;
 ' but I owe to myself the letting you
 ' into the Secret of the Adventure of the
 ' Grotto. Know then, continued she,
 ' without suffering me to interrupt her,
 ' that, on the Day when we had the
 ' Ball, at which so many extraordinary
 ' Incidents succeeded each other, the
 ' Counts *de BAR* and *de BRESSE* sepa-
 ' rately caus'd me to be demanded of
 ' the Duke in Marriage. Those Propo-
 ' sals could do no less than displease him ;
 ' as well upon Account of the ill Qua-
 ' lities of those Princes, as the Promise
 ' he

he had made to Monsieur de VERGI.
 He complimented them both ; and to
 get rid of their Importunities, told
 them, That he could not possibly re-
 cede from his Word given ; That I had
 long since been promis'd to the Count de
 VERGI, which Alliance was very shortly
 to be concluded. Those two unworthy
 Suitors grew outrageous at that Refu-
 sal, which, in all Appearance, was the
 Pretext for the base Action they com-
 mitted. The Duke, soon after, came
 into my Appartment, where, having
 given me an Account of what had
 pass'd between them, he told me, that,
 in order, for the future, to avoid Re-
 fusals of that Nature, which might oc-
 casion Disturbances in his State, it was
 his Pleasure, that I should prepare my-
 self, in two Days, to give my Hand
 to the Count de VERGI, adding, That
 he was weary of the small Haste I made
 to obey him.

At these Words he withdrew, leaving
 me overwhelm'd with Grief. The Time
 he gave me, pursued the Princess,
 seem'd to me so short, that I found
 myself at an utter Loss what Measures
 to take. The Billet you wrote me,
 touch'd me to the Quick : I read, in the
 most lively Colours, the Torments under
 which

which you languish'd, without having it in my Power to apply a Remedy. I determin'd therefore, at last, to speak to Monsieur *de VERGI*, in order to gain his Consent to defer our Nuptials for some Time. I doubted not, in the least, but that, with a good Grace, he would comply with what I had to request at his Hands, and in the mean while, to calm the Agitations of your Mind, I had the Imprudence to take with me the Answer to your Billet, which you expected, and which I had the Misfortune to drop at the Ball. Ever since that Time, I have been in the terrible Anxiety of not knowing into whose Hands my Letter has fallen.

Fear nothing, my Princeſs, interrupted I, with Precipitation ; Chance, which gave me ſo great a Share in the Incidents of that cruel Night, to repair the Tortures I have endur'd, caus'd that precious Pledge of your Goodness to fall into my Possession : Here is, continued I, that fatal Billet which has given me as much Torture as it now affords me Pleasure. Great God ! could I imagine that I was the Object of thoſe tender Regards, ſeeing it in the Possession of the Count *de BĀR*, and believing it intended for the happy *de VERGI* !

Upon

Upon this, I went on, and told her how I heard the Discourse between the Counts *de BAR* and *de BRESSE*, and all the rest, of which she was ignorant. You may imagine, my Lord, that I forgot not to paint out in lively Colours all the Agonies I had undergone. She seem'd touch'd at my Sufferings, and we both reflected, with Admiration, upon the Caprice of Fortune, which at the very Time when she seem'd absolutely bent upon my Ruin, reserv'd for me the Glory of disintangling the Intricacy of so many extraordinary Adventures.

After this Elucidation, the Princess reassum'd the Discourse. ‘ Far, said she, ‘ from reaping any Advantage from the ‘ Assignation I gave Monsieur *de VERGI*, ‘ the fatal Consequences it brought upon ‘ him, have made the Duke earnéster than ‘ ever for the Conclusion of my Marri- ‘ age, and he only waits for his perfect ‘ Recovery to make an End of it : Nor ‘ can I any longer blame his Procedure, ‘ since the Noise that Affair makes, may ‘ draw on me an unjust Censure, which ‘ nothing but my Marriage can possibly ‘ dissipate. But what redoubles my Des- ‘ pair, pursu'd *LAURA*, is, that *de VERGI*, ‘ whom Love has render'd diffident and ‘ clear-fighted, still continues in an Asto- ‘ nishment

nishment how Chance alone should direct you so opportunely to his Assistance. You may remember that, in the *Grotto*, he let fall some Expressions which shew'd his Uneasiness : But, VAUDRAY, continued she, sighing, I hope you will assist me to extinguish for ever that Spark of Jealousy which has taken Place in his Heart, and that you will fly all Occasions of coming into my Sight. --- Begin then to put it in Execution : Let us part, my dear VAUDRAY ; you know my Inclinations ; you see my Duty : *Adieu* ; keep me in your Memory : Notwithstanding the cruel Law which separates us, I shall never forget you.

A Flood of Tears put a Stop to her Words ; and reaching out to me her beautiful Hand, I fix'd my Lips thereon with such inexpressible Transport, that I thought I should have expir'd that Moment. I utter'd all that the tenderest Passion could dictate ; but, in a Word, my Lord, I was oblig'd to retire, pierc'd to the very Soul with insupportable Grief. I pass'd the Night in an absolute Despair ; and the next Morning, very *a propos*, I understood, that your Highness design'd to acquaint King PHILIP of the intended Marriage of the Count *de VERGI* with the

the Princess your Niece. This Occasion appear'd very favourable to my Design of absenting myself; for which Reason I so vigorously press'd my Father to endeavour to obtain that Commission from your Highness, that he undertook it, as well upon Account of my Intreaty, as that it was not disagreeable to his own Desires, for the Honour himself would reap by that Employ.

Your Highness had the Goodness to grant his Request, and I made ready to accompany him, far less out of any Curiosity I had to see the most august Court in *Europe*, than to prevent my being an Eye-Witness of my Rival's Happiness, which was seal'd a few Days after my Departure.

As VAUDRAY was going on with his History, and the Duke was listening with the greatest Attention, seeming to take Pleasure in the Recital of a Secret which so nearly concern'd him, a Noise was heard of the Hunters advancing that Way, and soon after a mighty Boar rush'd by them. The Duke immediately leap'd upon his Horse, and, follow'd by VAUDRAY, went in Pursuit of that terrible Creature, and had the Honour of destroying the Boar with his Lance. All the Ladies, with their

their Cavaliers, soon arriv'd there, and congratulated their Sovereign upon his Vigour and Agility.

That gallant Prince courteously return'd their Compliments ; and as VAUDRAY's Relation, and the Boar's Fall, had dissipated his ill Humour, he return'd to *Dijon* with a Clearfulness in his Countenance which he communicated to the whole Court. He expres'd to VAUDRAY, in particular, the extreme Satisfaction his Discourse had given him, and the greatest Impatience to hear the Sequel.

The End of the First Part.



The TRAGICAL
HISTORY
OF THE
Chevalier *de VAUDRAY*,
AND THE
Countess *de VERG I.*

P A R T II.



N the mean while, the Dutches of *Burgundy*, who had intirely abandon'd herself to an Excess of Jealousy, soon began her Artifices and Importunities with the Duke her Consort. She flatter'd herself with the Thoughts of having infus'd into the Breast of that credulous Prince part of the dire Malignity which rag'd in her

↓ own ;

own ; and she doubted not but that, in a very short Time, the insensible VAUDRAY would feel the fatal Effects of those perfidious Insinuations. But she found herself cruelly deceiv'd, when upon the next Opportunity she took to start a Discourse to the Duke upon that Subject, that Prince reply'd ; *Desist, Madam, from tormenting yourself : VAUDRAY is innocent. It is true he loves ; but I know the Object of his Vows.*

These racking Words were like so many Daggers to the Heart of the jealous and vindictive Dutchesse : She wanted little of sinking down under them ; and, in spite of her natural Dissimulation, she would infallibly have discover'd what it so highly concern'd her to keep secret, had that good Prince but harbour'd the least Suspicion of her Perfidy. However, recovering herself readily enough, ‘ I have, then, ‘ still greater Cause to be incens'd against ‘ that base, presumptuous Man, cry'd she ‘ with Vehemence, since having already ‘ his Heart engag'd with a previous Pa- ‘ sion, he has the Insolence to chuse me ‘ for the Object of his Railery : But I ‘ rather believe all that to be only the ‘ Continuation of those Chimera's with ‘ which he has already abus'd your Cre- ‘ dulity. Suffer me therefore, my Lord,

either to scruple the Veracity of his Insinuations, or to assist you in searching into the Bottom of a Mystery which I cannot, by any Means, hitherto comprehend.

Upon this, the artful Dutchesse, with a seeming Indifference, began to name all the greatest Beauties of the Court, in order adroitly to make herself Mistress of the Duke's Secret. But that Prince, little pleas'd with an Inquisitiveness which he was no wise dispos'd to satisfy, broke off the Conversation, and retir'd to his own Appartement.

The Dutchesse being now at Liberty to abandon herself to her Passions, sent for Madame de LANTAGE, and acquainted her with all that had happen'd. I was, before, sensible, said she to that *Confidante*, of the just Indignation which the Slights of an ingrateful Favourite inspire in an amorous and generous Breast ; but, 'till this Moment, I had conceiv'd only faint and imperfect Ideas of the racking, insupportable Tortures of a real Jealousy. VAUDRAY loves ! There is no longer any Room to hesitate at believing it. He, doubtless, in Concert with my unworthy Rival, laughs at my Weakness, and my impotent Resentment. With what Triumph and Satisfaction

‘ Satisfaction ought she not to receive
 ‘ the Sacrifice of all my Tenderness, and
 ‘ my eager Forwardness, while, aban-
 ‘ don’d to the cruellest Disquiets, I con-
 ‘ sume myself in fruitless Regrets ! No !
 ‘ continued she, with the utmost Trans-
 ‘ port of Rage, they shall never triumph
 ‘ with Impunity over the Dutchesse of
 ‘ BURGUNDY : With their Blood I will
 ‘ revenge myself for their Insolence, their
 ‘ Disdain, and their Temerity !

‘ The first Step to be taken, LAN-
 ‘ TAGE, pursu’d she, You must, before I
 ‘ can begin my Vengeance, assist me in
 ‘ finding out the detested Object of its
 ‘ dire Effects.

They might, probably, have some Sus-
 picion of the Courtesse *de VERGI*, upon
 Account of her Merit and Perfections ;
 but, by reason of her strict Retirement,
 there was so little Appearance of that
 Princess being the Person they sought
 for, that they could not continue a Mo-
 ment in that Opinion. Next they nam’d
 all the Ladies with whom VAUDRAY had
 the least Intimacy, or even Acquaintance ;
 but he shew’d so little Attachment to
 any one in particular, that they could not
 possibly fix any certain Judgment. At
 last it was concluded between them, that
 Madame *de LANTAGE* should take Care

to have his Motions so narrowly watch'd, that it should be very difficult for him to make one Step without their Knowledge.

The Dutches's was now no longer influenc'd by the tender Impulses of Love, but, on the contrary, was precipitately hurried on by an impetuous Torrent of Fury, Revenge, and Aversion. It was some Time before she made any Discovery that seem'd to satisfy her unjust Resentment ; but, at last, she imagin'd she had found her detested Rival, the Object of her implacable Hatred.

Madam *de LANTAGE* one Day brought her a little Box with a Picture in it, which she found in one of the Appartments in the Palace ; and the Beauty of the Diamonds with which it was adorn'd, was a sufficiently convincing Proof of its belonging to some Person of Consideration. The Dutches, who interpreted every Thing according to the Dictates of her Passions, without ever consulting Reason, doubted not, in the least, but that it had been dropp'd by **VAUDRAY**. She open'd it with the utmost Precipitation, and immediately knew the Features of Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*.

That

That young Lady was extremely lovely, of an illustrious Extraction, and a vast Fortune : Her Father, upon his Death-Bed, recommended her to the Care of Madame *de RABUTIN*, his nearest Relation, by whom this beautiful MONTBAR had been brought up from her Infancy. VAUDRAY, who had a great Veneration and Friendship for that Family, sometimes visited her : There wanted no more to make the highest and most groundless Suspicion pass in the Imagination of the jealous Dutches for incontestable Truth. She blindly accus'd her Want of Penetration, for having been so long impos'd upon by that imaginary Correspondence, and resolv'd to sacrifice to her Vengeance those two innocent Victims. She immediately commanded Madame *de LANTAGE* to acquaint her with all she knew concerning Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*. That *Confidante* told her, That, since that young Lady's Appearance at Court, several Persons of Distinction had made fruitless Addresses to her ; and, that, for three Months past, the Seigneur *de DAMAS* had been her passionate Admirer. This Nobleman was one of the bravest and best qualified Courtiers in BURGUNDY, but was of so hasty and violent a Temper, that, du-

ring the first Motions of his Passion, he was wholly incapable of hearing Reason, and, that it was thought, that upon this Consideration the young Lady had refus'd to declare in his Favour.

' Her Love to VAUDRAY, shall cost her
 ' dear, cry'd the Dutchesf ; she shall soon
 ' feel the Effects of the Fury she inspires in
 ' my Breast. In sacrificing her Lover,
 ' I am resolv'd to expose her to the Vio-
 ' lence of DAMAS. Such is my Resent-
 ' ment, such are the Convulsions my tor-
 ' tur'd Heart endures, that, provided the
 ' Criminal is drawn down the Precipice,
 ' I shall not scruple suffering the Inno-
 ' cent to perish. Here, said she to her
 ' *Confidante*, artfully convey this Picture
 ' into VAUDRAY's Pocket, and leave to
 ' my Address the Care of making the Ad-
 ' vantage, from your so doing, which
 ' my Vengeance expects.'

Having given Madame *de LANTAGE* that Order, which, in all Probability, was likely to cause all the Mischief that revengeful Princess desir'd, she pass'd to the Duke's Appartment, and there, so well disguising her Concern, that none could possibly perceive the Agitations of her Soul, she propos'd a Match at Cards, and nam'd the Persons who were to be concern'd.

It

It may be imagin'd, that VAUDRAY and DAMAS were not forgotten. The Duke, who liv'd and breath'd only for her, and whose Passion for her was still increas'd upon the Hopes he conceiv'd of her making him a joyful Father, readily accepted the Proposal : But far from proving a Diversion, it produc'd very different Effects.

The Parties being all got together, and engag'd in Play, Madame *de LANTAGE* made a Sign to the Dutches, that her Orders were put in Execution, and shew'd her the Ribband belonging to Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*'s Picture hanging out of VAUDRAY's Coat-Pocket. The Dutches made the Duke take Notice of it, and gave him to understand, that she intended to steal it. That Prince would willingly have prevented her, as being apprehensive that it might be the Countess *de VERGI*'s ; but how greatly was he astonish'd when the Dutches, having, soon after, abruptly enough, executed her Design, expos'd to the whole Company the Representation of Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*.

Excessive was VAUDRAY's Confusion and Surprize, to see a Picture, which, 'till then, he had never beheld, snatch'd out of his Pocket : The Duke was highly

piqu'd for having been, as he thought, so grossly impos'd on by his Favourite ; and DAMAS was struck with so violent a Resentment, that it was not without extreme Difficulty that he was able to contain himself within the Bounds of Moderation.

The Dutchesse, on the contrary, with a feign'd Gaiety, rally'd VAUDRAY to such a Degree, that, in spite of his natural Vivacity and Presence of Mind, he remain'd so confounded and embarrass'd as to what Answers he should return, that he confirm'd the Three Persons concern'd, in their first Suspicions.

DAMAS, for his Part, being no longer Master of his Passion, left the Appartement, the Dutchesse having already broke off Play, out of her Impatience to make Advantage of the Discord she had so inhumanly stirr'd up.

The Duke, who knew nothing of the Interest DAMAS had in Mademoiselle *de Montbar*, suffer'd VAUDRAY to depart, who had no sooner got without the Verge of the Court, but he was attack'd by that jealous Lover, who, Sword in Hand, fell upon him with such Fury, that, considering the Bravery of the Parties, their Rencounter might have prov'd fatal to both, had not several of their Friends,

Friends, Witnesses of the Duel, parted them Time enough to prevent the dangerous Consequences of their Quarrel.

They were both conducted to their respective Lodgings, where VAUDRAY, as soon as he had disengag'd himself from that importunate Crowd which had follow'd him Home, began seriously to reflect upon the Source of that unaccountable Adventure. He made no Scruple to believe it to be some new Project of the Dutchesse. It gave him no extraordinary Concern, as being accustom'd to the Persecutions of that unjust Princess : But what cast him almost into Despair, was the Impression he fear'd it might make upon Madame de VERGI.

The Greatness of his Prudence and Discretion had all along prevented him from discovering to that Princess the Sentiments the Dutchesse had for him, and, by Consequence, he had most carefully conceal'd from her the Confession which he had been oblig'd to make to the Duke.

But as in what had happen'd, that Director of his Destiny was immediately concern'd, he determin'd, that very Evening, to acquaint her with the Particulars, and to cast the Incidents of that unlucky

Adventure upon some private unknown
Enemy.

He was still busied with these Reflections, when his Brother enter'd his Chamber. ‘ I come likewise, said RAOUL ‘ to him, to charge you with Dissimulation : I have more Subject to do it ‘ than all the rest of the Court, since, as ‘ I have entertain'd with you the strict- ‘ est Friendship, you have, notwithstanding, made your Love to Mademoiselle ‘ *de Montbar* a Mystery to me.’

‘ For Heaven's Sake, Brother, interrupted VAUDRAY, impatiently, I intreat ‘ you do not, like the rest, compleat ‘ my Confusion by so ill-grounded a ‘ Raillery. I truly respect that deserving ‘ young Lady, but, I assure you, I am ‘ very far from being in Love with ‘ her.

‘ What ! reply'd *Raoul*, smiling, the ‘ Picture of a Beauty is found about a ‘ Man, and he pretends easily to per- ‘ suade the World, that he has only Re- ‘ spect and Esteem for the Object of so ‘ uncommon a Gallantry ! Ah, Brother ! ‘ Do not any longer make fruitless At- ‘ tempts to keep conceal'd from me ‘ what you cannot possibly keep from ‘ Publick Knowledge !’

‘ I can, nevertheless, safely avow, answer’d VAUDRAY, in his Turn, that tho’ it is undeniably certain, that the Picture you mention was found upon me, yet, upon my Honour, I know nothing how it came there.’

‘ Of that I am as ignorant as yourself, interrupted RAOUL, with a more serious Air ; but I will no longer keep you in Suspense concerning the Person to whom it belongs. I lost it in the Palace, and it was to my ownself that the amiable MONTBAR did that Favour, of which I am so unworthy, since I took so little Care of it. I cannot but reproach myself for having conceal’d my Passion from you ; but you ought to pardon my making it a Mystery, since that is the only Pleasure of Love. I now come to make Amends for my Fault, by an ingenuous Recital of my whole Amour with that Lady.’ He began in these Terms.

IT is now Three Years since I began to love Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*, and I may venture to say, that it is likewise Three Years since I have been bleſſ’d with her Affection ; for, by a happy Sympathy, our Hearts, at one and the same Time,

Time, felt the tenderest Effects of that sooth ing Passion.

You, doubtless, remember, my dear Brother, that I ran thro' all my Studies and Exercises with the young Chevalier *de RABUTIN*, and that, from our very Infancy, the strictest Friendship and Inclination for each other commenc'd between us. About the Time I mention'd, he took a Journey into the Country to visit the good Lady his Mother ; to whose Virtue and great Merit you are no Stranger. After he had made some Stay there, he began to be uneasy and melancholy at our Separation, and wrote me such pressing Letters to come to their Seat, that, at length, I determin'd to gratify his Request, and prevail'd with the Sieurs *du BLED*, *St. CHAUMONT*, and *la RIVIERE*, all his Intimates, to go down with me, to accompany our Friend in his Solitude.

Another Letter from *RABUTIN* hasten'd our Journey sooner than we had intended. He wrote to me, 'That in order to render the Country the more agreeable to us at our Arrival, we should chuse a certain Day, (which he mention'd) when all the Shepherdesses of those Parts were to meet at a gallant Feast in a Country-House, by which

' we

we were to pass, where he promis'd
 us a *Rural Ball*, which, perhaps, we
 would like better than those at Court.
 That, even if we did not find it an-
 swer the Idea he gave us of it, we
 should, however, be sure of seeing some
 very beautiful young Creatures : But,
 that, in order to avoid having that ru-
 ral Assembly under any Constraint, we
 must come dress'd like Shepherds :
 That, under Favour of that Disguise,
 we might, perhaps, inspire Love into
 some young Hearts which had never
 yet sigh'd : That, for his own Part,
 he would not fail of being present at
 a Diversion which so agreeably flat-
 ter'd his Inclination, and to that Pur-
 pose he had, already, prepar'd his Pa-
 storall Habit and Acoutrements.

This Letter I communicated to our
 abovemention'd Friends, and we all agreed
 to follow his Instructions ; and at the ap-
 pointed Time we set out from DIJON,
 very well dispos'd to participate of the
 promis'd Satisfaction. We procur'd our
 Shepherds Habits at a Village at some
 Distance from the Place assign'd for the
 Assembly. We took some Care that they
 should be neat and gallant, but not rich,
 and we doubted not but that they were

still

still too magnificent for the Simplicity of the Persons we were to meet.

The House to which we were going, was situated in a Plain, surrounded by lovely Meadows, all enamell'd with Flowers, thro' which, in Meanders, ran a beautiful small Rivulet : It appear'd plain, but commodious. Before we could come at it, we were oblig'd to pass thro' Part of a little Coppice, with which it was compass'd. This we found full of young Shepherdesses, who, in little Troops, were dancing with their Lovers, to the Sound of Fifes, Tabors, and Bag-Pipes, the Harmony whereof made the Neighbourhood of that rustick Abode resound with agreeable Echoes. Two Shepherds, with good Voices, sang certain Sonnets, of which Copies were given us. All around were plac'd Tables cover'd with Milk, Cream, Fruits, and Flowers. We had much ado to disengage ourselves from those jovial young Rusticks, whose Earnestness to have us partake with them of their Meriment, soon became troublesome, and to avoid their farther Importunities, we advanc'd towards the House.

The Court-Yard had no other Enclosure than a thin Hedge of Jessamine and Honey-Suckles, which left the Eye at Liberty to enjoy a most agreeable Prospect.

Having

Having travers'd that Court, we came into the pleasantest Hall in the World, in the Midst of which was erected a little Throne of Roses, which supported a fine large Piece of Painting, whereon were curiously represented the Emblems of LOVE and REASON.

This Contract between LOVE and REASON somewhat surpriz'd my Companions and myself; but, upon farther Examination, we were much more so, to find our Pictures, in Pastoral Habits, drawn on the same Piece, and so artfully and naturally done, that we had no manner of Difficulty to know for whom they were intended.

REASON on one Side, under the Form of a Woman with a severe Aspect, seem'd to forbid us Entrance into a delicious Garden. Opposite to her stood LOVE, who, with a flattering Countenance, seem'd to use his utmost Efforts to draw us thither. Under the Figure which represented REASON, were these four Lines;

*Far from hence, ye Swains, retire,
View these dismal Seats with Fear;
Tho' the Prospect courts you nigher,
Soon will dang'rous Scenes appear.*

'These

These Lines we thought not amiss ;
and casting our Eyes upon the two Distichs under the Figure of LOVE, we read thus ;

*Rigid Laws no longer boast
Which my Gifts with Scorn survey ;
And for Hearts in Raptures lost
The Art of Pleasing shall repay.*

As we were, with Pleasure, examining the gallant Devices of that beautiful Piece, RABUTIN, in a very pretty Sort of a Dress, came in laughing. Having mutually embrac'd, he told us, ‘ That, ‘ since we had escap'd the Snares which ‘ had been spread against our Liberty ‘ in the little Wood, he thought it his ‘ Duty, as a real Friend, by the Emblems in that Piece, to give us Notice ‘ of what we had to fear if we pass'd on ‘ any farther.’

We, in our Turn, answer'd, laughing, ‘ That the Enchantments which we had ‘ hitherto undergone, had not put our ‘ Hearts to any violent Tryal ; that his ‘ Emblems, beautiful and ingenious as ‘ they were, had no more dangerous Effects ; and, that a Person of his Age ‘ and Figure was much fitter to teach ‘ the Dictates of Love, than the Lessons ‘ of Reason ; and, to conclude, we in- ‘ treated

' treated him no longer to defer exposing
 ' us to the Perils with which we were
 ' threaten'd.'

At these Words, he conducted us into several Apartments hung round with Greens and Flowers, whose Odours perfum'd every Part of that delicious Place. The many Cages which were plac'd round every Window, and full of different Sorts of Singing-Birds, afforded our Ears inexpressible Pleasure by the sweet Warblings of their melodious Throats. These Objects redoubled our Curiosity of knowing in what all these Gallantries would terminate.

We came, at last, into the *Saloon* where the Ball was to be perform'd ; but whatever Ideas we had form'd concerning what we should find there, the Reality far exceeded the Vivacity of our Imaginations. Every Object in that lovely Assembly delighted the Eye ; a ravishing Symphony charm'd the nicest Ear ; Neatness and excellent Contrivance every where display'd the very Quintessence of a polite Taste. But we soon neglected giving Attention to the Niceties of Art, with which we were surrounded : The Appearance of about Twenty enchanting young Beauties, dress'd like Shepherdesses, seem'd alone worthy our whole Admiration.

R.A-

RABUTIN, who was charm'd at the Surprize in which he saw us, soon made us readily confess, that the Danger he had told us we were likely to be in, was but too real. ‘ You have a Taste too delicate, and too distinguishing, said he us, to mistake yourselves concerning the Rank and Merit of these Shepherdesses which causes your so visible Admiration. But, as a Token of the Honours intended you at this Feast, all the Shepherd's of the Assembly leave you at Liberty to make your Choice.’

It is here, my dear Brother, continu'd RAOUL, that I beg you to admire the Effects of Sympathy ; and it is only in order to make you sensible of its Power, that I am so particular in the Detail of this agreeable Adventure.

There were certainly in that Assembly some Persons nothing inferiour in Beauty to Mademoiselle *de Montbar* ; but my Heart made not a Moment's Hesitation, and, without concerning myself what became of my Friends, I flew, and cast myself at the Feet of that amiable Virgin.

In her Person and Dress was to be observ'd, a certain Air of Gallantry that enchanted the Sight ; and tho' her only Ornaments were Flowers, being so deck'd out

out to represent FLORA, she less imitated that Goddess in her Dress, than in her natural Charms.

‘ Amiable Shepherdess, said I to her, ‘ it is dangerous for strange Shepherds, ‘ like us, to tread this Ground ! We shall ‘ soon pay the Price of our Temerity ‘ with the Loss of our Hearts, and the ‘ only Thing we shall carry off, will be ‘ our Confusion for the Defeat. This is ‘ indisputably a Net which the mischie- ‘ vous CUPID has spread to intrap our ‘ Liberty : For my own Part, I submit ‘ without offering to resist, and willingly ‘ surrender my Heart as a Victim to ‘ your lovely Eyes, which are, doubt- ‘ less, the Snares of which that tyran- ‘ nick Deity makes Use, in order to tri- ‘ umph over it !’

‘ Fear nothing, gallant Shepherd, in- ‘ terrupted Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*, ‘ with a Voice that touch’d my very ‘ Soul, the God of *Love* has not intrusted ‘ us with the Management of his Con- ‘ quests : We should but very indiffe- ‘ rently acquit ourselves of so important ‘ a Commission. Nevertheless, if he had ‘ condescended to trust me with such ‘ a glorious Charge, both *He* and I should ‘ have had Cause to be extremely proud ‘ for having subjected to his Empire a ‘ Shepherd like yourself. I

I was perfectly charm'd with that so obliging a Reply, and this Conversation was continued with an Infinity of Wit on her Side, and abundance of Love on mine ; for, in Reality, my Heart was touch'd, notwithstanding I still was ignorant of even the Name of the Beauty who had got such an Ascendant over my Faculties. We danc'd together several Times, and I was very much surpriz'd at the graceful and agreeable Manner of her Performance. These Diversions were soon after interrupted by a noble Collation, at which both the Eye and the Taste were equally delighted.

To cut short ; after having pass'd a good Part of the Night in that little enchanted Palace, we broke up, and going out, found several Chariots, beautifully adorn'd with Gilding and Painting, which, by the Light of a great Number of Torches, conducted us to the Castle of RABUTIN. During the short Interval of this little Journey, from that obliging Friend, I got Intelligence of the Name and Condition of the amiable Person who had made such an Impression upon my Heart. He told me, ‘ That she was call'd Mademoiselle *de Montbar* : ‘ That she was left to his Mother's Care, ‘ who had brought her up from her Infancy :

fancy : That, being very considerable, both by Birth and Fortune, Madame *de RABUTIN* was very desirous, that he should have enter'd into a strict Engagement with that deserving young Creature ; but, that his Humour being so opposite to Engagements of that Nature, he had intreated the good Lady his Mother, not to force his Inclinations, notwithstanding he was sensible, that Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR* had no less a Share of Sweetness in her Temper, than she had of Charms in her Wit and Person.

Concerning the rest of the Company, who were present at the Feast, he answer'd my Companions, who inquir'd of him, That the Men were all Persons of considerable Distinction in that Province ; but for the Ladies, he only nam'd those for whom they express'd a particular Regard, who were Mademoiselle *de St. FAL*, *de CHAVIGNI*, *le Roy*, and *DARLIN*. We had no sooner receiv'd these Informations, but we arriv'd at the Castle ; but as it was very late, every one retir'd to the Appartement appointed for him.

The next Morning *RABUTIN* presented us to his Mother, by whom we were receiv'd with great Courtesy and Politeness. She pleasantly rally'd us upon our last
Night's

Night's Adventure, and told us, That her Son, who for some Time had intended that small Entertainment, had sufficient Leisure to prepare that Piece which had so agreeably surpriz'd us.

I again saw Mademoiselle *de MONT-BAR*, and found her so lovely, and so deserving, that I took a firm Resolution to love her eternally. I took an Opportunity, in a very serious Manner, to let her know the Excess of my Passion, and *RABUTIN*, whom I made my Confident, did me all the Service he could, while I stay'd with him, omitting nothing to engage that dear Lady to lend a favourable Ear to my Vows.

It was not long before she had the Goodness to confess, ‘ That the same Sympathy which had made me her Voluntary, had forcibly determin'd her to declare in my Favour ; ’ but told me, ‘ That it was absolutely requisite, that we should conceal our Sentiments ’till such Time as she should be at Liberty to dispose of herself.’

Ever since, my dear Brother, Madam *de RABUTIN*, who has the Goodness to approve of my Passion, permits me (tho’ unknown to the Object of my Love) to make my Addresses, and nothing could have troubled my happy State, had not the

the late fatal Accident poison'd the Sweetness of it.

As I am a younger Brother, and it is no way just that the young Lady should marry beneath what she might reasonably expect, and pretend to, we wait 'till it shall please the Duke, our Sovereign, of his Bounty, to advance me to some Post worthy her Fortune and Merit. But the Addresses made her by DAMAS, appear'd to me, upon Account of the vast Estate of which he is possess'd, to be of such dangerous Consequence, that I could not help expressing my Apprehensions and Disquiets to Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*; but that dear, generous Creature, has done her utmost Endeavour to restore a Calm in my agitated Breast; when, finding that all her Pains were to little or no Effect, she, two Days ago, as a solemn Pledge of her Fidelity, gave me the Picture, which I had the Misfortune to lose in the Palace.

RAOUL had no sooner spoke these last Words, when one of the Duke's Attendants came to tell VAUDRAY, that his Highness ask'd for him; who was not a little startled and disturb'd in Mind with the Apprehensions of what the Duke might have to say. He had been, of late,

late, so much injur'd to the unjust Practices of the Dutches, that he continually fear'd some new Persecution. His Brother, still dreading the Consequence of the Jealousy and Resentment of DAMAS, would by no Means leave him ; so they both went to the Duke's Appartement, and were equally surpriz'd to find there the Dutches and Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*. That young Beauty, having heard of the Disorder her Picture had occasion'd, determin'd to declare the whole Mystery of that Adventure in Presence of his Highness ; but before she proceeded to explain herself, she intreated the Duke to send for VAUDRAY, and was extremely pleas'd that Chance had likewise brought his Brother to be Witness of what she was about to say.

The furious Dutches, who still thought VAUDRAY was the Lover, was in the last Despair that she could not possibly avoid this unforeseen Blow. She fear'd, that, in spite of all her Artifices, the Duke would immediately join the Hands of those Lovers. While her invidious Mind was labouring under these racking Thoughts, Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*, addressing her in a most respectful Manner, ask'd for her Picture. With this the Dutches could not handsomely refuse to

to comply, and instantly return'd it ; upon which, the amiable MONTBAR, turning towards RAOUL, and presenting him the Picture, ‘ Here, said she, take better Care, for the future, of this authentick Pledge of my Heart.’ After this, she publickly, and circumstantially, avow'd RAOUL’s long Passion for her, and made no Scruple of acknowledging, that she listen'd with Pleasure to the Vows he made her.

The Duke was so highly satisfied at the unravelling of that Adventure, that he gave Orders for the speedy Celebration of their Nuptials ; and, that the happy RAOUL might be a suitable Match for a Lady of Mademoiselle *de Montbar*’s Fortune, he gave him a very considerable Post then vacant : Nor did he forget to lay his absolute Commands upon DAMAS, never to attempt to disturb the Tranquillity of that happy Pair, who, a few Days after, were united in the Bonds of Wedlock, with great Splendor, and general Applause.

In the mean while, the Dutchesse felt the Agitations of her Breast hourly to increase ; for, notwithstanding her Jealousy of Mademoiselle *de Montbar* was calm'd, yet, as she must needs have an Object upon which to vent her Fury,

her Restlessness still augmented. She had given an Account to her *Confidante*, Madame *de LANTAGE*, of all the Particulars of an Event so contrary to her pernicious Designs, and they were racking their Imaginations with new Projects, to disturb the Happiness of VAUDRAY.

The Duke, after having made many serious Reflections upon the late Incident, was wholly at a Loss to comprehend how VAUDRAY came to have Mademoiselle *de MONTBAR*'s Picture in his Pocket. This good Prince was of an easy, credulous, and diffident Temper, and, by Consequence, was susceptible of any Impression. This Character naturally render'd him wavering and uncertain in his Thoughts, especially in an Affair of such Obscurity as were the Accusations which had been charg'd upon VAUDRAY. To clear up the Doubts which agitated his restless Mind, he sent for that Favourite, and having first caus'd him to repeat, with Protestations, that he knew nothing how he came by his Sister-in-Law's Picture, he order'd him to sit down, and relate the remaining Part of his Amour with Madame *de VERGI*; which he did in the following Terms.

THE
*The Continuation of the History of
 VAUDRAY, and the Countess
 de VERGI.*

I Left off, my Lord, as near as I can remember, at my Departure from hence for the Court of *France*. We set out, honour'd with your Highness's Commission, and soon arriv'd at our Journey's End. King **P H I L I P** receiv'd us with that Bounty which gains him the Hearts of all who approach him, and my Father had the Honour of rendering your Highness a particular Account of his Negotiation.

That Monarch was then deeply involv'd in Wars with the Counts of **F L A N D E R S**, **B O U L O G N E**, and **C H A M P A G N E**, who had join'd the *English*, his inveterate Enemies, and the Court was so taken up in observing the Motions of the adverse Party, and in making Preparations for a cruel War, that it was become a very improper Place to dissipate a Despair so deeply rooted as was mine; so that, my

Lord, I so blindly abandon'd myself to its Tyranny, that I have often reflected, with Amazement, how I could possibly avoid sinking under the unequal Weight of that inexorable devouring Monster : Thoughts, most fatal to my Repose, would seize my Spirits, representing to my tortur'd Imagination the exquisite Happiness the Count *de VERGI* enjoy'd, and then, my Lord, I thought every Moment would be my last.

In a Word, my Liege, I pass'd several Months at *Paris*, in a Condition so extremely deplorable, that it would have rais'd Compassion even in my Rival himself. That City, so famous for the Beauty of its Structures, and for that prodigious Concourse of People continually flocking thither from every Part of the Country, appear'd in my Eyes no other than a frightful Desart ; and, notwithstanding all the Pleasures with which it abounds, I was charm'd with the Order PHILIP AUGUSTUS sent us to make ready for our Departure, in order to demand a Body of Troops from your Highness, to reinforce his own, the Enemy having already taken the Field with a numerous Army : Nor was he able to meet them but with the greatest Disadvantage, without your Assistance.

I was even transported with Joy at the Thoughts of an Opportunity of once more approaching my Princess ; and, notwithstanding I was sure of finding her in the Possession of my too happy Rival, I should, however, get a Sight of the dear Object of all my Vows. We arriv'd here, and my Father had the Honour of signifying to your Highness the Desires of His Majesty PHILIP AUGUSTUS. The Uneasiness under which your Highness then labour'd, upon Account of the League made between the Counts *de BAR*, *de BRESSE*, and *de GENEVE*, which Princes seem'd to threaten your States with an unjust War, prevented your Highness from complying with His Majesty's Demands, since you thought it absolutely necessary to keep all your Forces in a Readiness for your own Defence : Your Highness only granted One Hundred and Fifty Cavaliers, commanded by the Count *de VERGI*.

But, during these Occurrences, my Lord, I had, several Times, seen my lovely Princess. A certain charming Langor, which I fancy'd I observ'd in her beautiful Eyes, most agreeably flatter'd my Passion ; and, notwithstanding I had not once had the Opportunity of speaking a Word to her but in Publick, my Tenderness

dernes made Advantage of the Trouble and Agitation which reign'd in her Discourse. How unjust, how inhumane does Love render us ! My Heart sought Consolation under its Tortures from the flattering Hopes of seeing her partake of my Misfortunes.

In the mean while, the Cavaliers who were design'd for the Army, began to be nam'd : I obtain'd of your Highness the Honour of being inroll'd for one of the Number. I made ready for my Departure, with the malicious Satisfaction of having my Rival with me, far from the Object of his Love, and of seeing him partake with me of the Torments of Absence. The Evening before our Departure, I went to take Leave of my Princess.

‘ Madam, said I to her, I coveted not the Honour of serving under your illustrious Confort with any other View, but that of guarding his Life for your Sake, or of dying in the Endeavour. I know not, continued I, in a lower Voice, whether I shall not merit greater Praife for only having taken such a Resolution, than for the effecting so glorious a Design.

‘ Go, generous Youth, said she ; follow the noble Sentiments of your Heart :

' Heart : You are not the only Person
 ' who knows how to form generous Re-
 ' solutions ; I must confess, with Blushes,
 ' that I am no more a Stranger than
 ' yourself to what it costs to put them
 ' in Execution.

The Crowds of Cavaliers, who approach'd to take Leave of the Countess, interrupted our Discourse, and I was oblig'd to depart without farther Conversation. I presently, by an Effort of my Passion, attach'd myself to the Count our Commander, finding a Sort of Satisfaction in sacrificing my Jealousy for the Sake of the adorable Person to whom Fate had united him : But the Count's great Merit, and his Friendship for me, soon forc'd me to do by Inclination and Duty, what, at first, I only did through a certain Nicety of Punctilio.

In short, my Lord, we arriv'd at ABBEVILLE, the Place appointed for the Rendezvous of the Troops. There we heard of the dreadful Overflowing of the *Seine*, which had like to have destroy'd Paris, and the whole *Isle of France* : But our own particular Disgraces soon caus'd us to forget general Calamities. The King, at the same Time, had Intelligence of the Taking of St. Valery, and the Sieging of Arras by BALDWIN Count of Flanders.

We made all possible Expedition to relieve that Place. In our March we had several Rencounters with Parties of the Enemy, in all which the Count *de VERGI* gave shining Instances of his Intrepidity, and in all perillous Occasions I kept always near his Person, the better to deserve his Friendship and Esteem.

One Day, in particular, His Majesty order'd the Count, with his BURGUNDIANS, together with WALTER *de la VIEFVILLE*, Lord of BUIRE, who knew the Country, at the Head of a like Number of Cavalry, to advance, in order to attack a Detachment of Enemies which, we were assur'd, was near *Cercan*.

In Effect, we found them there, but so much superior in Number to both our united Troops, that it seem'd wholly impossible for us to gain any Advantage over them: Nevertheless, the great Courage of our gallant Leaders would not suffer them long to deliberate on the Disproportion of Strength, and we fell on them with an Ardour, which, in Appearance, promis'd soon to put an End to the Dispute; however, the Engagement was long and dubious. The Count distinguish'd himself in a very advantageous Manner; but his Horse being kill'd under him, he was just ready to be overborne with

with Numbers, and had infallibly lost his Life, had not the Idea of the Promise I had made to my lovely Countess spurr'd me on to the Preservation of her too happy Spouse.

I precipitated myself amidst the Enemies, and came Time enough to save his Life. The Count, after I had so seasonably reliev'd him, redoubled his Efforts, and the Enemy was soon after routed, with considerable Loss. VIEVILLE likewise, upon this Occasion, shew'd worthy Proofs of his Valour and good Conduct. When all was over, the Count embrac'd me, call'd me his *Tutelar Angel*, and publickly related the Particulars of those Two imminent Perils from which I had delivered him.

In the mean while, my Lord, King PHILIP so inconsiderately engag'd himself in the Enemy's Country, that Count BALDWIN, having had Time to destroy all the Bridges, we found ourselves shut up on every Side. All the Endeavours we made, in order to get out of that dangerous Situation, prov'd intirely fruitless; and his Majesty, having lost all Hopes, was oblig'd to capitulate with the Count of Flanders, upon Conditions very much to that Prince's Advantage.

We pass'd the Winter at *Vernon*; and the Enemy, who spent that whole Season in making Preparations, open'd the Campaign with the Siege of St. *Omer*. The King, endeavouring to repair that Loss by the Reprizal of St. *Valery*, narrowly escap'd falling into the Hands of RICHARD, late King of *England*, who, with a considerable Force, was waiting for him near *Gamache*. In this perillous Circumstance it was that PHILIP AUGUSTUS gave glorious Proofs of the Greatness of his Courage; for, notwithstanding the Baron de *Noailles* and MENESIER de *Mauvoisin*, both old and experienc'd Commanders, counsell'd him to retreat without engaging, he could not prevail with himself to take their Advice, and, without the least Hesitation, attack'd the Enemy, tho' twelve Times stronger in Number than himself.

The Count de *VERGI*, who covet'd nothing but Honour, would scarce let slip so fair an Opportunity of acquiring it. I follow'd him, with the rest of the *Burgundian* Cavaliers, and was an Eye-Witness of the heroick Intrepidity of PHILIP AUGUSTUS, who would never turn his Horse's Head till he had, thro' the thickest of his Enemies, open'd a glorious Passage to retreat to *Gisors*.

It was in this bloody Engagement, my Lord, that, in spite of all my Efforts, the gallant Count *de VERGI*, who had done Actions worthy of immortal Remembrance, receiv'd his Death's Wound. He fell from his Horse, and had unavoidably remain'd in the Enemy's Power, had not the Despair in which I was, to behold that generous Warrior in such deplorable Circumstances, given me Strength enough, with the Assistance of one of his Esquires, to get him up upon my Horse, which, happily, was one of the best in the whole Army. Charg'd with a Treasure, which the Idea of my Princess render'd still more precious to me, I rode full-speed; in spite of the Enemy, 'till I had pass'd thro' them, and reach'd the Town, which was at no great Distance.

My chief Care, as your Highness may well imagine, was to carry the Count to a Surgeon, who, after having put him to Bed, visited his Wound in my Presence. I was ready to die for Grief at the Judgment that Artist gave of it; and while, melting into Tears by the Count *de VERGI*'s Bed-side, I was expressing the Sincerity of my Attachment to him, the King, who, by his successful Temerity, had open'd for himself a

free

free Passage at his Enemies Expence, fell into a still more evident Peril.

The Bridge over the River *Epte*, overcharg'd with the Multitude of Runaways which crowded thereon, sunk down all at once, under him, and had it not been for the Goodness of his Horse, he had been there infallibly drown'd, as were the Barons *DESBARRES*, *de NOAILLES*, *de MAILLY*, and seventeen others, Persons of Distinction.

I was, at that Juncture, wholly employ'd in giving the Count *de VERGI* such Instances of Friendship as he might expect in his present melancholy Circumstances : I beheld him hastening towards his End with a Firmness of Mind which express'd the Greatness of his Courage and Resolution ; my Grief touch'd without daunting him, and he incessantly repeated, That he would carry with him to the Grave, an extreme and grateful Acknowledgment of my obliging Friendship.

But, my Lord, those about him were, at length, forc'd to give him Notice, that he had not long to live. This News afflicted me more than it seem'd to do him, and my Consternation was as great, as if I had not had any Reason to have expected it. As for the Count, looking on me with Eyes sedate, and full of Tranquillity,

quillity, ‘ My dear VAUDRAY, said he, ‘ let us make the best Use we can of the Moments I have to live.’ After which, calling for Pen, Ink, and Paper, he was a considerable while in composing a Letter for the Countess, his Lady.

With what Reflections were my Thoughts agitated during that Interval ! I flatter’d myself, that the generous Count would acquaint that Goddess of my Vows, of what I had done for him, and by that Means would engage her to make me some Acknowledgment ; but I soon again banish’d from my Imagination those two flattering Ideas : I had bound myself under an Obligation to her, either to lose my Life, or to return her illustrious Consort safe to her Embraces. What will she not surmise ? said I to myself ; she will, perhaps, suspect, that my Jealousy prevented me from giving him what Assistance I might have done, and induc’d me unworthily to desert my Charge in the Moments of Extremity.

I was full of these racking Reflections, when the Count, having finish’d his Letter, order’d me to be call’d, and, when he had seal’d it, desir’d me to make every one leave the Room ; when, bidding me sit down by him upon the Bed, he made me swear by all I held most sacred, that

I would deliver to the Countess, his Spouse, without attempting to open it, that Letter, which he, at the same Time, put into my Hand.

I, without Hesitation, promis'd all he desir'd. ‘ I'm too well satisfied of your Integrity, said he to me, to remain a Moment in Doubt of your violating what you promise, and shall, therefore, make no Scruple of freely explaining my Mind to you. Know then, my dear VAUDRAY, that I have, a long Time, perceiv'd your Passion for Madame my Spouse; a Lover's Eyes are too clear not to penetrate into the deepest Mysteries: I was no Stranger to the Tenderness you bore to the Princess LAURA, nor to your respectful Regards towards the Countess *de VERGI*. You may, likewise, call to Mind, that I could not avoid hinting to you something to that Purpose, when you gave me that timely Assistance against the Counts *de BAR* and *de BRESSE*. Since that Time, notwithstanding the Caution with which you have taken your Steps, your Eyes have betray'd you, and your passionate, tho' awful Respect, has given me more Disquiet than the tenderest Declarations would have done. In Effect, I had Reason to be apprehensive of it: LAURA is:

is not ingrateful ; she loves you, VAU-
 DRAY ; and tho' she never has deviated
 from her Character, or Duty, yet all
 my Love, all my Assiduity, have gain'd
 no Ground against her first Inclinations.
 I endeavour'd to hate you, as the sole
 Obstacle to my compleat Happiness,
 and I imagin'd you had the same Sen-
 timents towards me ; but you have
 forc'd me to love a Rival who triumphs
 over the best Part of my Conquest ;
 and the Delicacy of your Passion gi-
 ving you an inviolable Attachment for
 every Thing that belongs to Madame
de VERGI, you have sacrific'd your Ha-
 tred to the Violence of your Love.
 You deserve to be happy ; and the No-
 bleness of your Sentiments merits a Heart
 intirely free and disengag'd : The Coun-
 tess will, undoubtedly, repair the In-
 justice of Destiny, and will, for me, ac-
 quit herself of the essential Obligations.
 I have to you.

The Count, by the Weakness which
 suddenly seiz'd his Spirits, had much ado
 to pronounce those last Words : In this
 Condition he still languish'd a few Hours,
 wholly depriv'd both of Speech and Sen-
 ses, and then expir'd in my Arms.

It is not possible for me to express to
 your Highness the Extremity of Grief
 into-

into which this cruel Loss plung'd me ; I, however, neglected nothing to render him, after his Death, all that was due to his Rank, Merit, and illustrious Birth ; after all which, I made ready to re-conduct into *Burgundy*, the Remainder of your Troops, the Command of which he had committed to my Care. The King, after he had burn'd the City of *Dreux*, dismiss'd his Army, and I, trembling all over, took the Way towards your Highness's Dominions.

How long, and how tedious did I think that March, notwithstanding I still fear'd to arrive too soon at my Journey's End !
 ‘ With what an Eye will my beautiful
 ‘ Countess receive me, cry'd I to myself,
 ‘ I, perhaps, carry my Condemnation in-
 ‘ clos'd in the deceas'd Count's Letter.
 ‘ Ah ! it is, doubtless, in my Prejudice,
 ‘ since with such Precaution he forbad me
 ‘ to open it : That Care but too plainly
 ‘ denounces to me, that he enjoins her
 ‘ never to see me more ! ’ I protest,
 my Lord, that these, so natural, Reflec-
 tions a Thousand Times press'd me
 to penetrate into that terrible Mystery.
 ‘ Who can divulge this my Breach of
 ‘ Faith, said I, every Moment : Let me
 ‘ for ever conceal from LAURA's Eyes
 ‘ the last Injunctions of the Count de

‘ VERGI: By this Means I may, probably, evade the most dreadful Misfortunes which can possibly attend my future Days.’

Notwithstanding all this, my Lord, I withheld a Curiosity which would have been injurious to the Character of a Man of Probity, of which I make Profession.

‘ I shall die, cry’d I, if this Letter banishes me for ever from the Sight of my adorable Princeſſ ! But, at least, my scrupulous Punctilio must needs force her to esteem me ; and I shall carry with me to my Grave the Glory of having never fail’d either in my Passion or my Duty.

At last, my Liege, I arriv’d at Court, fully determin’d to expose myself to whatever my Fate had allotted for me. I had the Honour of presenting myself before your Highness ; you receiv’d me with your usual Goodness, and had the Condescension to give me to understand, that you was satisfied with my Conduct in the Field, and with my Care of the deceas’d Count. You had then lately lost your illustrious Consort, MATILDA of Portugal. The whole Court was under an Affliction suitable to the Greatness of that Loss, and the Death of Monsieur *de* VERGI still increas’d that so universal a Mourning,

he

he being equally lov'd and esteem'd by all.

It was a considerable while before I could have a particular Audience of the ~~consolate~~ Countess ; and, at last, in order to obtain it, I was oblig'd to send her Word, That the Count, in his last Moments, had intrusted me with a Letter for her, with express Orders to deliver it only into her own Hands. This induc'd her to grant me Admittance. I found her languishing, and overwhelm'd with a Sorrow, which redoubled my own ; nay, it seem'd as if the Sight of me augmented the Bitterness of her Grief.

' Well, said she, VAUDRAY, (after some
 ' Moments Silence, her Words interrupted
 ' with Sobs) You have not been able to
 ' execute what you so generously resolv'd !
 ' In spite of my Vows, and your Care,
 ' Monsieur *de VERGI* is no more ! I,
 ' however, render you the Justice to be-
 ' lieve, that you are not insensible for
 ' his Loss : No, you have given Proofs
 ' to the contrary, the Remembrance
 ' whereof I shall retain as long as my Life
 ' endures.'

' My Recompence is too great, Madam,
 ' interrupted I, since you condescend to
 ' call to Mind the feeble Marks of my
 ' Duty, which I tender'd to that illustrious
 ' Count ;

Count ; but, alas ! how fearful am I of having brought you, in this Letter, Orders fatal and destructive to my Life's Repose ! Upon this, trembling every Joint, I told her the last Discourse I had with Monsieur *de VERGI*. I painted out to her the racking Disquiets I felt upon Account of the Letter I had to deliver her, and presented it to her almost expiring with mortal Apprehensions. She appear'd satisfy'd with my Fidelity and Resignation, and to give me a Proof thereof, she read, aloud, these Words, which, for the exquisite Pleasure and Happiness they promis'd, and have since procur'd me, are deeply ingrafted in my Memory. The Contents were, Word for Word, as follow.

I Shall see you no more, my dearest LAURA ! Death is about to deprive me of Nature's rarest Treasure, and allows me only Time to paint you out a small Part of my Reluctance, or rather Despair, and to acquaint you with the last Proof of Love which I exact from you. VAUDRAY will deliver you this ; I owe him all Things, Madam, and it is to you I leave the Care of recompencing him. He loves you ; I had the Penetration to discern it ; and notwithstanding Virtue and Duty shut your Eyes against

against his Passion, your Heart was never insensible to his Tenderness. This generous Rival has omitted nothing to express his Ardour ; it is I alone who have receiv'd shining Proofs of its Violence, whilst he sigh'd in secret. But, Madam, if his Generosity has got the Upper-hand of me during my Life, suffer me to triumph over him after my Decease. Join yourself to VAUDRAY with everlasting and inviolable Bonds ; he is worthy of this Happiness ; refuse not to yield to the Passion of a most faithful Lover, and to the earnest Intreaties of an expiring Husband. Adieu, my dear Countess ; I feel Death's Approaches ! Do not forget me ; I am intirely sensible of my exquisite Felicity by the inexpressible Torture I feel at parting with it.

Judge, My Lord, what was my Surprise at the reading of this Letter : The Happiness it decreed me appear'd so extraordinary, that I was a long while in Suspense if what I heard was real. ' Great
 ' God ! cry'd I at last ; could the Loss
 ' of a Thousand Lives merit a Recom-
 ' pence so glorious ! Ah, VERGI, thy Vir-
 ' tue is uncommon !

In the mean while the Countess, her Eyes inclin'd towards the Ground, remain'd in profound Silence, nor durst I in-

interrupt her ; Fear, Awe, and Respect, restrain'd my Impatience. At length, looking on me, her Cheeks all bedew'd with Tears ; ‘ VAUDRAY, said she, by how much the more the unfortunate Count expresses his Acknowledgment to you, by so much I am the more sensible of what I owe to his Memory, and of what I owe to myself. Let it suffice you to know, that you merit, even in my Opinion, all that Monsieur *de VERGI* has destin'd for you : But, be so generous as not to press me for the Execution of an Injunction of what must wound my Character, tho' I cannot deny but that, in some Manner, it flatters my Inclination. Content yourself with the most perfect Esteem, and suffer me, uninterrupted, to weep the Loss of my illustrious Spouse.’

‘ Yes, Madam, reply'd I ; it is not reasonable that you should ever forget the happy unhappy Count *de VERGI* ! He well deserv'd your Tears ; and how glorious and desirable soever is the Fortune which he generously design'd me, I shall not attempt to obstruct a Sorrow so justly grounded : My Respect, and my profound Submission shall, alone, put you in Mind of my Ardour for you, and of his Bounty to me. The Happiness

‘ piness which shall be destin’d me by
 ‘ way of Acknowledgment, or Gratitude,
 ‘ I will owe to nothing but to the Con-
 ‘ stancy and Perseverance of my Passion :
 ‘ From that alone, Madam, it is that I
 ‘ hope for a glorious Change in my For-
 ‘ tune.’

‘ Go, VAUDRAY, answer’d the Prin-
 ‘ cess, retire ; I must not hear you any
 ‘ longer : Your submissive Resignation
 ‘ will stagger those Resolutions which
 ‘ my Character ought to maintain.’

At these Words she made a Sign to me to leave her, and I departed, divided between Hope and Fear. I had never presum’d to aspire so high as to that State of Earthly Bliss with which the Count *de VERGI*’s Letter flatter’d my Imagination : It fill’d my Soul with Ideas a Thousand Times beyond what I ought to hope for. What different Changes of Mind can Love produce ! Before the reading that Letter, I believ’d myself lost for ever ; after I had heard its Contents, I imagin’d myself within Sight of being the happiest of Mortals.

Several Months pass’d, during which, an awful and silent Respect was my sole Mediator ; and, notwithstanding I presented myself before my adorable Countess as frequently as I possibly could, I yet

yet affected not to seem desirous of having any particular Conversation with her. This prudent Conduct, I fancy'd, would plead my Passion better than the most pressing Arguments could have done, and, in Effect, I was not deceiv'd in my Conjecture; for I soon found it had made an Impression upon the charming LAURA. Seeing me, one Day, leaning against a Window, with my Eyes full of Languor, stedfastly fix'd on her, she, approaching me, said,

' How much, VAUDRAY, is your Silence
 ' to be fear'd ! I am but too sensible of
 ' what Respect and Passion it conceals ;
 ' the tenderest Expressions would certainly
 ' have less Effect upon me : But, my
 ' dear VAUDRAY, besides the general
 ' Reasons which Decency impose on me,
 ' the Jealousy with which you had in-
 ' spir'd Monsieur *de VERGI*, causes in
 ' me certain Scruples which wound my
 ' Nicety.'

' Madam, reply'd I, oppress'd with a
 ' Grief which she might easily discern ; I
 ' will not oppose to your Sovereign Laws
 ' ought but an implicit Submission ; and
 ' how cruel and rigorous soever it ap-
 ' pears to me, without the least visible
 ' Repugnance I will sacrifice my Life
 ' to give you Proofs of the unfeign'd
 ' Deference I have for you.' When I
 had

had spoke these Words, I made her a profound Reverence, and departed.

After this Conference the Princess affected to be still more retir'd than ever, and insensibly accustom'd herself to Solitude. She has since avow'd to me, That the Count's Letter had expos'd her to many violent Conflicts within herself ; and that, at last, being no longer able to flatter herself with the Hopes of resisting the Inclination she had for me, she thought that Absence alone could succour her upon this Occasion.

In Effect, my Lord, she went into the Country, a few Days after, and her Departure was so precipitate, that I had not the least Notice of it. This, her leaving me, which I thought wholly causeless, plung'd me into mortal Anxiety. ‘ Alas ! without Doubt, cry'd I, her Heart not only is repugnant to the last Request of her expiring Lord, but the dear humane Creature likewise flees the Sight of a faithful Adorer, who would incessantly reproach her for her Ingatitude ! ’ I remain'd some Days finking under these insupportable Ideas, when, at last, no longer capable of bearing up against the racking Tortures they caus'd in my Soul, I took a Resolution to seek, at the Feet of my divine LAURA, an Eclaircissement of

the

the Doubts which so cruelly tormented me. Being thus determin'd, I departed ; and, under Pretence of Hunting, I went to the Princess's Country-Seat. She was then in her Garden ; and to avoid giving her Notice of my coming, I hasted thither. I found my Goddess alone, sitting by the Side of a Fountain, whose agreeable Murmuring excited a sweet Thoughtfulness. As soon as she saw me, she could not prevent her lovely Countenance from being cover'd over with Blushes.

' Ah, VAUDRAY ! said she, What do
 ' you do here ? Have you already for-
 ' got my Duty, and your own Promi-
 ' ses ? For, in a Word, the Regard I
 ' have for you, cannot so far blind me
 ' as to make me hope, that the Duke
 ' will ever consent to my deceas'd Huf-
 ' band's Desires : And can I then give
 ' my own Consent ? What will the World
 ' say ? I shall be justly tax'd with having
 ' counterfeited a Husband's Injunctions
 ' purely as a Pretext to countenance the
 ' Dictates of my Inclinations. Tho' our
 ' Hearts are made to love each other, our
 ' Conditions are unequal : I endeavour'd
 ' to fly you to defend and fortify myself,
 ' both against you and against myself ;
 ' yet Love conducts you hither to stag-
 ' ger such just and reasonable Resolutions.

‘ Pity me, my dear VAUDRAY, have Com-
 ‘ passion on me ! and, if you are truly
 ‘ generous, suffer not that an inglorious
 ‘ Weakness dishonour me in the Eyes of
 ‘ all Europe.’

‘ Lovely Princess, interrupted I, Hea-
 ‘ ven is my Witness that your Honour,
 ‘ your Glory, and your Character, are
 ‘ no less dear to me, than they are to
 ‘ yourself ; and notwithstanding the Vio-
 ‘ lence of my Love infinitely surpasses
 ‘ an ordinary Passion, I desire no Hap-
 ‘ piness at the Price of your Repose. I
 ‘ shall not, therefore, to maintain my
 ‘ Claim to your Heart, alledge either the
 ‘ ardent Passion I have always had for
 ‘ you, nor the peremptory Law of an
 ‘ expiring Husband’s last Request ; that
 ‘ generous Rival has more than over-
 ‘ paid me for all Obligations by the sole
 ‘ Idea of a Hope so glorious as the En-
 ‘ joyment of what he design’d me. Per-
 ‘ mit me, therefore, rigid, yet prudent
 ‘ Princess, to die in adoring you ; that
 ‘ is the only Felicity I have remaining :
 ‘ Continue to sustain the Lustre of your
 ‘ high Rank : As for me, I shall think
 ‘ myself but too happy if, by my Death,
 ‘ I can any wise contribute towards your
 ‘ Glory.

‘ Ah !

‘ Ah ! cry’d the Princess, after a Moment’s Silence ; It is too much ! You triumph ! Reason is too weak to encounter with so much Love, and such Submission ! Well ! VAUDRAY, I will make you happy : I shall have, at least, for my Apology and Defence, the Commands of a dying Husband, and the Tenderness of the most perfect, and the most faithful of Lovers : But, let us conceal from the whole Earth an Union which may be condemn’d. Here, receive my Hand as a Pledge of the Happiness which I promise you.’

Am I able, my Liege, to represent to your Highness what I felt at that inexpressibly enchanting Assurance of my Felicity ! I pass’d so suddenly from the blackest Extremity of Sorrow, to the most sensible Excess of Joy, that this Contrast had like to have cost me my Life. I threw myself at her Feet, and there, by the most lively Transports, I express’d to her Part of the Pleasure with which my Heart was agitated.

We, afterwards, agreed together of the Measures we shou’d take, and of the Conduct we were to observe to keep secret from the whole World an Intelligence, the Mystery whereof would still increase the Sweetness.

I took my Leave, and return'd to Dijon, after my Princess had granted me her Permission to come sometimes to visit her, under the like Pretext, and with the same Precaution, 'till the happy Moment in which, her Time of Mourning being at an End, she was in a Condition to become mine for ever.

Your Highness may well imagine that I took Advantage of the Leave granted me. How sweet, by the Charms of her Wit, and the noble and generous Sentiments of her Soul, did I find the Conversations I, from Time to Time, had with her ! What Reasons ! What Motives to redouble my Passion, had it not been, long since, at the highest Pitch it could ever possibly arrive at ! Insomuch, that my Condition was such, that the happiest of Mortals might have envied my Felicity.

In short, my Lord, that Minute, so languish'd for, at last arriv'd ; the Moment that was to advance me to the highest Summit of Earthly Glory, was denounc'd to me. I privately repair'd to my Goddess ; and, before she would engage herself to me for ever, she exacted from me the most inviolable Oaths to conceal, with the utmost Care and Regard, the Happiness I was about to enjoy. This Secret was of such Importance to her, that, to be always

always the Mistress of it, she would not impart it to any of her most faithful and favourite Female Attendants ; and, in the Chapel of her Castle, an unknown Priest join'd us to each other in sweet and sacred Bonds.

The Extasy I was in to find myself Possessor of so unspeakable a Blessing, is hardly to be conceiv'd. To be sensible of the exquisite Happiness I enjoy'd, one must have been in Love, to the highest Degree of Distraction, with some adorable Object. I was so intoxicated with my State of Bliss, that I often believ'd that, to be some flattering Illusion, which, in Effect, was an enchanting Reality.

My dear Countess gave me the Key to one of the Gates of her Garden, in order to prevent my being seen by any of her Domesticks. I always came on the Side which answers to that Gate, and was receiv'd by the Countess in a Ground-Closet adjoining to her Appartment, and which look'd into the Garden : None of her Women were ever suffer'd to enter it ; and a little Dog, which she took Care to keep shut up therein, by the Noife he made, gave her Notice, every Evening, of my Arrival.

This happy State of Life continued for some Years, and was so far from diminish-

ing the Ardor of my Love, that it increas'd its Violence. That lovely Princess has so many Charms in her Conversation, that nothing upon Earth is sweeter, or more agreeable, than her Company : Her Wit is poignant, her Judgment solid, and her Humour easy, pleasant, and always the same. In a Word, my Lord, such a Complication of rare Qualities engage Hearts by irresistible Graces, ever new, and of which it is impossible to be ever tir'd ; and, in fine, that dear Princess, since she is at Liberty to express her Tenderness, receives the Proofs I give her of my Love, with such inexpressible Bounty, that the God of Love never united two Hearts which did greater Honour to his Empire, than ours. Nevertheless, Fortune, jealous of a Felicity to which she had nothing contributed, forc'd me to absent myself from her Arms.

The King, press'd by the Emperor **OTHO**, sent to demand of your Highness some Succours, of which he stood in great Need. You took the Resolution, my Lord, to put yourself at the Head of the *Burgundian* Troops, and, by your Valour, to maintain your high Reputation, and the Glory of the *French* Monarchy. While your Highness was employ'd

ploy'd in making Preparations for that glorious Campaign, what did not my amiable Countess say to me ! ‘ You leave me, then ! said she ; cruel War snatches you from my Arms, to expose you to the most terrible Dangers ! There, alas ! you may, perhaps, lose your dear Life : But assure yourself, that in only weeping the Perils and Hardships to which you will be expos'd, I shall still suffer more than you ; but the same fatal Blow which shall bereave you of your Life, will infallibly hurry me to my Grave ! ’

These were the Expressions, my Lord, of a Person who was, is, and ever shall be, the sole Object of all my Vows ! I was so transported at the moving Demonstrations of her Tenderness, that how high soever might be the Glory to which my Ambition tempted me to aspire, yet all the Honour that Fortune could give me in the Field, could be but a slender Recompence for what I lost in quitting LAURA. I must, however, resolve to do it. I will not tell your Highness what we said at parting ; you may easily imagine, that nothing could be more sincere, or more passionate : But I, at last, tore myself from the Embraces of my divine Countess, and had the Honour to follow

your Highness as one of your Equipage. My Father, whom you had honour'd with the Command of your Guards, took my Brother with him, and it was not long, before we reach'd the Plain of *Bouvines*. This Campaign was as glorious to your Highness, as it was fatal to us, since our Father there honourably lost his Life in defending yours.

The War was happily ended by that famous Battle, and your Highness return'd to your Dominions crown'd with 'Laurels, and cover'd with immortal Renown. At your Return you espous'd our present Dutches, and then it was that you honour'd my Brother and me with particular Distinction : We had, before, felt the Effects of your Bounty ; but your generous and grateful Heart, touch'd with our Father's Loss, caus'd you, with a liberal Hand, to bestow upon us many of your most valuable Favours ; in the Front of all which, I, in particular, always plac'd the Honour of your Confidence. The very Day of your Arrival I flew to my Princess. With what Transports of Joy and Tenderness was I receiv'd ! Nothing had ever been so moving as our Parting : Nothing could possibly be more passionate than the Pleasure we mutually felt at our Meeting again.

Our

Our Discourses, interrupted by ardent Caresses, evidently demonstrated that we were inspir'd with Transports unknown to vulgar Lovers. Since more than a Year that I return'd with your Highness, I enjoy, without Interruption or Disquiet, the unspeakable Happiness of so sweet an Intelligence. Nothing can be added to my Felicity ; I love as tenderly as I am belov'd ; I taste the Pleasure of keeping the most agreeable Secret in the World ; nor should any Consideration upon Earth have induc'd me ever to have reveal'd it, had not the ill-grounded Uneasiness of the Dutchesse troubled your Tranquillity of Mind, and, upon Account of the inviolable Attachment I have to your Highness, forcibly compell'd me to trust you, my Lord, with a Secret upon which depends the whole Repose of my Life. I shou'd be apprehensive of its being in Danger, had not your Highness had the Goodness, by the most sacred Oaths, to make me easy upon a Matter of so great Importance to me ; for I once more repeat, my Lord, that the Life of the Countess, and my own, are absolutely attach'd to the Observance of your Promise.

VAUDRAY here having ended his Relation, the Duke, who had listen'd to it with great Satisfaction and Attention, no sooner perceiv'd that he had done speaking, but, in a most courteous Manner, he express'd the Pleasure he had receiv'd in his Discourse.

‘ Far from blaming Madame *de VERGI*, said that Prince, I cannot but infinitely approve of her Conduct: A Lover so compleat in all Respects as yourself, certainly merits to touch the Heart of the most deserving Lady: Besides, her Husband's Interruption authorizes her Choice. How happy are you! added the Duke; You taste all the sweetest Delights of Love! You have forgot all its past Torments; and what, in my Opinion, renders you a still more happy Pair, that, since the Time of your first Union, you have both reserv'd that lively Ardour of Passion which is seldom felt but at the Beginning. It is so rare to meet with these Sentiments, after the Rites of *Hymen* are perform'd, that no Example is less common than yours.

‘ Ah! my Lord, interrupted VAUDRAY, smiling, the Attachment your Highness has to the Dutchess, is a clear Evidence that this Maxim is not general; even if it is true, that some Husbands may be

met with, who are Enemies enough to
 their own Repose to suffer a luke-warm
 Indifference to take Place of an ardent
 Love. I, for my Part, am too sensible
 of the Value of the Blessing I possess,
 and of what I am indebted to Madame
^{de} VERGI, ever, voluntarily, to de-
 prive myself of a Prize, after which
 I have so long languish'd ; and my bet-
 ter Half, my adorable Countess, has too
 great a Share of Solidity in her Dispo-
 sition, and too much Gratitude and Ge-
 nerosity in her Soul, not to be eternally
 the same to a Man whose Sentiments
 for her are capable of no Change.

You are, then, the happiest of Mor-
 tals, my dear VAUDRAY, reply'd the
 Duke ; all Things conspire to compleat
 your Felicity ; for I am so touch'd at
 your Patience and Perseverance, so rea-
 sonable, and, withal, so tender, that
 I am determin'd, by a publick Appro-
 bation, to authorize the Countess in the
 the Goodness of her Choice ; by do-
 ing which, I will give to all *Europe* a
 shining Proof of the great Regard I
 have to your Merit, by raising you, at
 the same Time, to a Rank of the first
 Distinction.

Ah ! my Lord, interrupted VAUDRAY,
 casting himself at the Duke's Feet, and
 em-

' embracing his Knees ; I am pierc'd to
 ' the Quick with the most grateful Ac-
 ' knowledgment of so uncommon a Mark
 ' of Bounty, and of the undeserv'd Fortune
 ' which you offer me. But, my Liege,
 ' my Heart, void of Ambition, never
 ' aspir'd to such an elevated Condition :
 ' The Friendship with which my Prince
 ' honours me, and the sweet Pleasure it
 ' receives from Love, amply satisfy all
 ' my Desires : I prefer this State of Sweet-
 ' ness and Tranquillity to a Dignity for
 ' which I was never created. Suffer me,
 ' therefore, my Lord, to continue making
 ' my whole Application to remain in your
 ' Favour, and to bound all my Wishes
 ' in the Possession of my LAURA's Heart.
 ' Pardon me, then, if I decline an Ho-
 ' nour which may fully your Glory, and
 ' wound the Character of Madame *de*
 ' VERGI.'

The Duke, surpriz'd at a Modesty
 which to him seem'd scarce natural, re-
 main'd silent for some Moments, doubt-
 ful what Answer to return. By how much
 the more considerable was the Grace he
 was inclin'd to grant to his Favourite,
 and the more extraordinary he look'd
 upon his Refusal to be, by so much
 the more his diffident, suspicuous Heart
 prompted him, with Uneasiness, to pe-
 netrate

nebrate into the Cause of what he so little expected. He, at last, fancy'd to have found the Mystery of it in the Accusations with which the Dutchesse had charg'd VAUDRAY. This Idea made such an Impression on his Mind, that he began to fear, that all he had heard was no other than a plausible Fiction, invented merely to conceal real Sentiments.

Thus prepossess'd, he re-assum'd the Discourse with an Air of Chagrin and Discontent. ‘VAUDRAY, said he ; in order fully to convince me of your Veracity, I must be an Eye-Witness of your Happiness ; I am determin'd to go with you to my Niece : I will not be seen ; but I must needs have this definitive Satisfaction, which, alone, can stifle, and banish from my Remembrance the Diffidence which a Refusal so little expected, creates in my Soul.’

‘I am most wretched, my Lord, interrupted VAUDRAY, that you seem still dubious of my Innocence, after the Effort I have been making to convince you of it : But now, alas ! it is no longer Time for me to hesitate. I will conduct your Highness to Madame *de Vergi* : I will make you Witness of my Transports, and of her Tenderness : You will, then, be satisfy'd, that the Dutchesse

‘ Dutchess is deceiv’d in taking the Proofs
 ‘ of my respectful Zeal for Signs of te-
 ‘ merarious Love. But how, my Lord,
 ‘ will you deport yourself upon this Oc-
 ‘ casion? My Princess will, infallibly, die,
 ‘ not only with Surprize to see you, but,
 ‘ likewise, at so unpardonable a Token
 ‘ of Indiscretion in me, contrary to all
 ‘ my solemn Vows; for, to be plain with
 ‘ you, I have never yet dar’d to acquaint
 ‘ her with the Violence your Highness
 ‘ has been pleas’d to do me, nor have
 ‘ I given her any Notice of the Motives
 ‘ which induc’d you to it. Judge, there-
 ‘ fore, my Lord, the fatal Consequences
 ‘ which your Presence may produce, since,
 ‘ if any Disaster befals that Goddess of
 ‘ my Soul, I shall, for her Loss, and my
 ‘ own Imprudence, expire before your
 ‘ Face.’

‘ Fear nothing, reply’d the Duke, im-
 ‘ patiently; I again confirm to you my
 ‘ Promise, with Oaths the most sacred
 ‘ and inviolable; and you may assuredly
 ‘ depend, that the Countess shall not per-
 ‘ ceive my being with you.’

‘ Well! my Lord, said VAUDRAY, sor-
 ‘ rowfully: When will you go?’ ‘ This
 ‘ very Evening, reply’d the Duke, as soon
 ‘ as ever I am disengag’d from the Croud
 ‘ of Couriers who besiege me, I will
 ‘ steal

' steal away by the Back-Stairs which open into the Palace-Garden, where you shall attend my coming, and will, without Delay, repair to LAURA's Castle.' VAUDRAY, having receiv'd these Instructions, full of Trouble and Agitation of Mind, left the Duke's Apartments.

In the mean while, the Dutchesse, who, by Madame *de LANTAGE*, had been inform'd of the long Conference which had pass'd between the Duke and VAUDRAY, doubted not, in the least, but that the whole Subject thereof had been the intire Recital of an Amour, the very Thoughts of which drove her to Despair. The violent Rage which agitated her Breast, not suffering her to remain long in one Place; immediately after Supper she went down into the Garden, accompany'd by her *Confidante*, to discourse with her, at Liberty, of the Tortures under which she labour'd, and of the Designs she had against VAUDRAY. The Evening was extremely pleasant, tho' the Moon gave no Light, so that the Coolness of the Air engaging her to stay, she continued her Walk longer than she, at first, intended. She took several Turns in the different Walks whereof the Garden was compos'd, 'till Weariness, at last, oblig'd

oblig'd her to sit down upon a green Bank which ran all along the Palisades. It was then the pleasantest Time of the Summer Season, and she resolv'd to stay in the Garden 'till the Dawn of the Morning.

She had been there scarce a Moment, when, hearing a Noise, she perceiv'd two Men on Horse-back, on the Outside, near her, whom, as they pass'd by, she easily knew, by their Voices, to be the Duke and VAUDRAY. ‘ This Night favours my Design, said the Duke, in a low Voice ; ‘ under Favour of its Darkness, conceal’d ‘ from prying Eyes, I have an Opportu- ‘ nity, unperceiv’d, of becoming an Eye- ‘ Witness of the Happiness which attends ‘ you. I am sensible that I abuse your ‘ Confidence : But, my dear VAUDRAY, ‘ I love the Dutches : Her Suspicions, ‘ far from diminishing, hourly increase, ‘ and she obstinately persists in her Be- ‘ lief, that you are in Love with her.’

‘ Ah ! my Lord, interrupted VAU-
DRAY, I respect her as Confort to my
Prince, but I do not love her other-
wise than, as such, I ought to do : And,
as to the rest, I intreat you to believe,
that no Woman upon Earth can ever
appear lovely in my Eyes after the di-
vine Person who is the sole Object of my
Adoration.

‘ I agree, reply’d the Duke, still continuing his Pace, that you are the happiest of Mortals, to possess a Treasure whose Charms are so infinitely engaging.

What would not the curious, listening Dutchesse have given to have heard the rest of that Conference ? But as they still continued going on, she was soon depriv’d of that Satisfaction. ‘ Great God, cry’d she, with what Rigour am I tortur’d ! Nothing comes near the Fury which rends my Soul asunder ! But, nothing in Nature shall protect from my heavy Vengeance the unworthy Objects of my Hatred ! As for my own Life, I covet not to prolong it for one single Moment, only for the Pleasure of sacrificing their detested Blood to my just Revenge.

Madame *de LANTAGE*, terrify’d at the Vehemence of her Passion, endeavour’d, by all possible Means, to calm the Rage of her implacable Breast ; and it was not without extreme Difficulty that she prevail’d with her to return to the Palace, and to take some Repose.

While this pass’d, the Duke, conducted by VAUDRAY, arriv’d at the Castle. They left their Horses fasten’d a few Paces distant from the Entrance into the Garden, and advanc’d towards the little Gate, of

which

which VAUDRAY had the Key. Having open'd it, he led the Duke to a small Distance from a Summer-House, contiguous to the dear Scene of all his Bliss. This delightful Bower was cover'd with a fine Dome, surrounded, on three Sides, with Cross-Bar Windows, which, from the Garden, gave free Passage to the Sight.

When the fortunate Lover had, with great Precaution, posted his Prince behind certain Trees, he enter'd the Cabinet, which was illuminated with several Crystal Lamps ; when unlocking a Door in the Wall, immediately a most beautiful little Spaniel ran barking out, which was always the welcome Signal whereby the Countess had Notice of her Lover's Arrival ; that happy Pair having never had any other Witness of their Raptures ; and now the lovely Countess, with all her Charms, came into the Bower.

The Duke, who, without being perceiv'd, having a full Sight of her, was struck with no small Surprize at the Gracefulness of her Appearance, and the lovely Figure she made, added new Beauties to that charming Place. As for VAUDRAY, no less transported, nothing less respectful than on the first Day of his Passion, he cast himself at her Feet, and seem'd to make a Thousand amorous Protestations
of

of eternal Fidelity and Adoration, nothing of which the Duke could hear ; but he beheld the amiable LAURA embrace her faithful Consort, and bestow on him such tender Careesses, that were sufficient to excite the Envy of the happiest Monarch in the Universe ; and it may be easily imagin'd, that the passionate VAUDRAY was not remiss, by his Transports, to return the Love he receiv'd.

But to draw a Curtain over so delicate a Part of this History, the Countess withdrew towards the Dawn of the Morning, and VAUDRAY retir'd from that dear Scene of Bliss, the happiest and most amorous of all Lovers. The Duke was so touch'd at the good Fortune of his Favourite, that he embrac'd him with the greatest Affection, and highly congratulated him for the Honour and Felicity which he enjoy'd.

They left the Place with the same Caution they had observ'd in approaching it, and remounted their Horses, making what Speed they cou'd to get to *Dijon*, before the Morning surpriz'd them.

‘ It carry'd with it so little Probability, said the Duke, as they went along, that you should refuse the advantageous Offer which I made you, that, with Blushes and Confusion, I avow, I was somewhat

somewhat doubtful of your Sincerity :
 But, my dear VAUDRAY, I am now
 intirely sensible of the Delicacy of that
 Refusal. You are possess'd of the most
 agreeable, and most virtuous Woman in
 the World, whom you passionately doat
 upon ; a vain, transitory Idea of Gran-
 deur would, doubtless, prove some Di-
 minution of your happy Condition :
 Enjoy, continued that Prince, enjoy a
 Fortune, by so much the greater and
 more estimable, as you have had the
 Address of inhancing the Pleasure of it
 by keeping the Secret of your Happi-
 ness, as an impenetrable Mystery, and for
 ever depend upon your Prince's Friend-
 ship, which, from henceforward, nothing
 upon Earth shall ever be able to stagger.

VAUDRAY, full of Acknowledgment,
 thank'd the Duke in the most submissive
 Terms. He begg'd Pardon for the Ne-
 cessity he had been in of making him an
 Eye-Witness of his Passion for the Coun-
 tress his Niece. ' I am not ignorant, con-
 tinued he, that the Respect due to your
 Highness, ought to have restrain'd my
 Transports ; but how great soever the
 one may be, it must, of Necessity, give
 Place to the other.'

With these, and the like Discourses, the
 Duke enter'd his Palace, and caus'd him-
 self

self to be put to Bed. He had scarce enjoy'd a few Hours Repose, when the unquiet Dutchesse, whom the last Night's Words had kept waking, resolv'd, at any Rate whatever, to penetrate into a Secret upon which she imagin'd the Felicity of her whole Life absolutely depended.

She was no Stranger to the Duke's Character : She well knew the strong Ascendant she had over his Soul, especially, since Age and Fondness had increas'd his natural Weakness : Nor did she make any Doubt but that, by her Artifices and Address, she should find Means to triumph over a Man whom she govern'd with a still more absolute Power since her pretended being with-Child.

To this Purpose she came into his Apartment ; and seating herself upon the Bed-side, ‘ I too inconsiderately disturb your Repose, said she to him, with an Air somewhat haughty and disdainful, ‘ since, upon Account of your nocturnal Excursions, in which your Favourite VAUDRAY engages you, your Highness had more than ordinary Need of Rest. ‘ I was a Witness, last Night, of your following that unworthy Sycophant, ‘ who not only insolently attacks my Honour in the most sensible Part, but has, likewise, the Presumption to endeavour

' deavour the alienating your Heart from
 ' its Devoir to me. You are in Love,
 ' then, added the artful Dutchesse, exalt-
 ' ing her Voice, and notwithstanding all
 ' your Vows, another robs me of the
 ' Treasure due alone to my Love and
 ' Tenderness ! Is this, then, that secret
 ' Passion which you father'd upon VAU-
 ' DRAY ? I am ruin'd ! I am betray'd by
 ' my ingrateful Lord, who, not satisfy'd
 ' with basely sacrificing me to an unde-
 ' serving Rival, is so ungenerous, as to
 ' triumph over my Credulity ! For, in a
 ' Word, no longer pretend to cast upon
 ' your Favourite an Amour of which
 ' he is only the Pretext. Without Re-
 ' sentment you suffer the audacious Pas-
 ' sion he has for me, in Regard to the
 ' Services he renders you with your new
 ' Mistress : But, desist, my Lord, from
 ' attempting any farther to abuse me thus
 ' palpably, and permit me to finish the
 ' wretched Remnant of my Life in some
 ' obscure Corner of the Earth.

In pronouncing these last Words, the
 perfidious Dutchesse cover'd her Face with
 her Handkerchief, as if to conceal the
 Tears which she pretended were flowing
 from her Eyes. This artful Behaviour
 had its desir'd Effect on the amorous
 Duke, who was so mov'd, that snatching
 one

one of her Hands, and tenderly pressing it between his own, he said ; ‘ Mitigate, ‘ I beseech you, Madam, a Grief which ‘ drives me to Despair. A false Appear- ‘ ance causes me to seem criminal in your ‘ Eyes. But, I solemnly protest to you, ‘ that the last Night’s Adventure, which ‘ gives you such Umbrage of Uneasiness, ‘ wholly concern’d VAUDRAY, and not ‘ me. It was in order to cure, and dissipate your Suspicions, and my own, that ‘ I was desirous of having ocular Demon- ‘ stration of the Veracity of his Affer- ‘ tions ; I am, at length, fully convinc’d ‘ of his Sincerity ; and now, when no- ‘ thing is capable of troubling my Tran- ‘ quillity, you are endeavouring, Madam, ‘ to make me unhappy, by starting Doubts ‘ and Scruples equally offensive and inju- ‘ rious both to my Honour and my ‘ Love.

‘ What poor Excuses ! What weak Evasions are these ! cry’d the impatient Dutchess : Do you imagine I can be so satisfy’d, so easily impos’d upon ? No ! no ! my Lord ; add not the lowest and most ungenerous Artifice to the most sensible of all Affronts ! If your Arguments had the least Ground of Truth, you wou’d, of your own Accord, have been impatient till you had nam’d to me the ‘ Object

‘ Object of VAUDRAY’s Vows, in order
 ‘ to acquit yourself of a Suspicion, which,
 ‘ with so apparent a Probability, alarms
 ‘ me : But you make Use of an imagi-
 ‘ nary Object, purely to conceal that real
 ‘ one for which you sigh.’

‘ Ah ! Harbour not, Madam, such
 ‘ Thoughts, interrupted the passionate
 ‘ Duke ; I love none but you : Recal-
 ‘ to Mind the Tokens I have always
 ‘ given you of my Tenderness, and rest
 ‘ assur’d, that I shall never change. Is not
 ‘ this sufficient ? Or, would you have me
 ‘ reveal a Secret, which, by the strongest,
 ‘ and most sacred Oaths, I am bound to
 ‘ keep inviolable ? ’ ‘ Well, then, reply’d
 ‘ the imperious Dutchesse, rising up ; keep
 ‘ that important Secret ; but hope for no-
 ‘ thing from me but Coldness and Indif-
 ‘ ference.’ After these Words, she ab-
 ruptly left the Room, and went to im-
 part the whole Purport of that Conference
 to Madame de LANTAGE.

That adroit *Confidante* readily conje-
 stor’d, that the Method she had taken,
 was the only Way to sift out of the Duke
 what she was so desirous of knowing ; and
 these two pernicious Women instantly set
 about studying the Measures necessary to
 be taken, in order to come to their Point ;
 the Result of which Deliberation was,
 that

that the Dutchesse should feign herself Sick.

In the mean while, the Duke, afflicted at his Lady's Displeasure, resolv'd to study some Means to appease her. He rack'd his Brain in thinking upon how he should bring it about. He foresaw, with Anguish and Concern, that he shou'd scarce ever be able to overcome her Obsturacy, but by sacrificing to her VAUDRAY's Secret : but his Honour, and his innate Probity, not permitting him to hesitate a Moment whether he should violate, or religiously observe his Promises ; he therefore sought other Methods to disabuse her ; and he fancy'd, that his Assiduity, accompany'd with magnificent Festivals, would, in Time, dissipate a Suspicion which must occasion great Uneasiness to herself.

He had just fix'd upon this Resolution, when VAUDRAY, agreeable to the Duty of his Employ, came into his Appartement. The Duke made no Mention to him of the Discourse he had lately held with the Dutchesse. He fear'd he wou'd be alarm'd thereat, and that he might imagine him to be capable of committing a Weakness from which he thought himself for ever exempt.

‘ VAUDRAY, said that Prince, I intend
‘ to proclaim a magnificent Turnament ;

' you shall be one of the Defendants, together with the Barons *de MAILLY*, *de BEAUFREMONT*, and *de NEUFCHATEL*.
 ' For three Days you shall defend the Lists against all Adventurers who shall present themselves ; nor will I omit any Thing that can add to the Solemnity and Splendor of this Festival. Give Orders to the Heralds to proclaim, That free Liberty shall be given to the Assailants to make Choice of their Weapons, whether Sword, Lance, or Mace, every one according to his Fancy. I commit to your Charge the Care of marking out the Lists, and of getting Scaffolds erected for the Ladies, who shall judge of each Champion's Behaviour, and deliver the Prizes to those, who, by their Valour, shall best deserve them ; for, it is my Design, my dear VAUDRAY, (continued he, inclining towards him to embrace him) to celebrate the Satisfaction I have in your Union with my amiable Niece.' The Favourite, highly pleas'd, thank'd his Prince for the Honour he did him, and, making a low Obeisance, went to put his Orders in Execution.

The Dutches, in the mean while, soon began to put in Practice the Artifice she design'd to make Use of. The Duke going to visit her in her Appartment, was de-

deny'd Admittance, tho' in a very respectful Manner, by Madame de LANTAGE, who, counterfeiting great Affliction, told him, That *the Dutchesse* was seiz'd with a violent Pain in her Head ; that she fear'd the Consequence of so sudden an Indisposition ; to prevent which, it was very requisite that she should not be disturb'd.

There needed no more to drive that weak, amorous, and credulous Prince almost to Despair. He immediately went down into the Garden, to endeavour there, alone, to dissipate his Chagrin, and to wait till the Dutchesse should be visible : But his Uneasiness giving him no Manner of Respite, he, almost every Moment, return'd to inquire concerning the Health of her, upon whom his own absolutely depended. The artful *Confidante*, under several different Pretences, still prevented him from informing himself, with his own Eyes, of the Dutchesse's Ailment, as well foreseeing, that those Obstacles would redouble his Disquiet ; nor was she mistaken. As the Duke had not been able to get a Sight of her all that Day, early the next Morning he came to her Chamber-Door, when, being introduc'd to her Bed-side, he, in most passionate Terms, express'd the extreme Concern he had been in, upon Account of her Indisposition, and for

having been so long depriv'd of the Pleasure of seeing her.

But she, with a feign'd Languishing, interrupting him as he was about to proceed, ‘ Can I believe, my Lord, said she, ‘ that you are any wise sensible to any ‘ Thing that concerns me, since I am reduc'd to the wretched Condition in ‘ which you find me, solely thro' the ‘ Grief and Agitation of Mind which ‘ your Perfidy has occasion'd ? I lov'd ‘ you ; I thought myself belov'd ; your ‘ hourly repeated Protestations still gave ‘ me fresh Assurances of it ; and I find ‘ myself betray'd, at the very Time when ‘ my Heart was wholly abandoning it ‘ self to the sole Pleasure of possessing ‘ yours : But, what-most of all redoubles ‘ my Despair, is, the dragging along with ‘ me, in my own Destruction, the precious Pledge of your former Love, which ‘ I carry within me, and which you are ‘ hastening to make the innocent Victim ‘ of the Levity of your inconstant Soul.

‘ Madam ! interrupted the Duke, with ‘ great Signs of Weakness, which he, yet, ‘ endeavour'd to conceal ; What fatal Satisfaction can you take in driving me ‘ thus to Despair, by this unjust Affliction ‘ to which you abandon yourself ? For ‘ Heaven's Sake, consider a little what

‘ Ap-

Appearance is there that I should be capable of the Perfidy wherewith you charge me. My Years, my Conduct, and my excessive Fondness of you, are more than sufficient to destroy an Idea so directly contrary to what I owe to myself: And to add, if possible, to these so effectual, so sensible Reasons, I, again, swear and protest to you, that Curiosity, and nothing else, led me to see VAUDRAY's Mistress. I was willing to have ocular Demonstration, fearing to be imposed on by a false Confidence: Besides, Madam, your Instigations, as well as my own Suspicion, led me thither.

I am but too well convinc'd, return'd the Dutches, by the frivolous Evasions you alledge, how little you are touch'd at the State wherein I am, and at the Danger in which, at the same Time, you involve this, so long languish'd-for, Successor of yours. No! you prefer a vain and fruitless Point of Honour, as you term it, to the real Repose which you may easily give us both: But, alas! my Lord, you never truly lov'd me!

These Words she pronounc'd with an Accent so tender, and so languishing, that the Duke perceiv'd he could not long withstand such a Tryal, and, therefore, hoping to divert her from insisting farther,

he said, ‘ Heaven is my Witness, Madam, that nothing can stand in Competition with the Passion I have for you ; but can you desire that I shou’d dishonour myself, and blast my Character by the basest, and most unworthy Perjury in the World ? Wou’d you, by so black a Piece of Treachery, make me the Ridicule of all Mankind, and render my Name infamous throughout the Universe ? I am born a Prince ; and shall I fully that august Character, by the base, inglorious Perpetration of a Deed of Horror, which will be held in universal Detestation ? Cease then, Madam, cease to press me any farther, if my Honour and good Name are as dear to you as they ought to be ! ’

This dangerous Woman was too well acquainted with the Duke’s Disposition, not to be sensible that he began to stagger ; for which Reason, re-assuming the Discourse, without giving him Time to relapse, she went on thus ; ‘ All that you so dread, my Lord, might come to pass, in case I had any particular Motive, or Interest, to divulge the Secret I demand of you with such pressing Importance ; but, consider, my dear Lord, that it is another *Your-self* who languishes to be freed from a Doubt which plunges her into

‘ into an Extremity of Despair. It is a
 ‘ restless, tortur’d Wife, who desires to
 ‘ efface from her Heart a Suspicion which
 ‘ consumes her, which incessantly preys
 ‘ upon her Vitals ! For, in Effect, my
 ‘ Lord, what other Motive cou’d excite
 ‘ my Curiosity ? What is VAUDRAY’s Pa-
 ‘ sion to me, if I cease to be the Object
 ‘ of it ? What Satisfaction can I reap by
 ‘ disturbing, by my Indiscretion, the Tran-
 ‘ quillity of two Lovers who are happy
 ‘ in each other’s Embraces ? Recollect
 ‘ yourself, then, my Lord, and be sen-
 ‘ sible how weak and frivolous are all
 ‘ your Excuses against such unanswerable
 ‘ Reasons.’

‘ Well, Madam, answer’d the too easy
 ‘ Prince ; you have vanquish’d ! I see
 ‘ you must be satisfy’d : But, allow me,
 ‘ at least, Time to get the Better of that
 ‘ Remainder of Scruple which, still, is
 ‘ warring in my Soul. Think, then, up-
 ‘ on your Recovery ; and it shall not be
 ‘ long before I will convince you of the
 ‘ Extremity of my Love, by the Excess of
 ‘ my Weakness.

After this dangerous Conversation, the Duke went out : But, the Apprehension left VAUDRAY shou’d read in his Countenance the Remorse wherewith his Soul was previously agitated, made him take

the Resolution of absenting himself, for some Hours, from the Palace. In order to this, he order'd Horses to be got ready, and, follow'd only by a few Officers, he rode out of the City, to gain Time to dissipate his Chagrin and Confusion. During this his Absence, he plung'd into Reflections, which fill'd his Mind with the blackest Ideas. The faithless Deed he was about to commit, represented itself to his Imagination as a Thing wholly unworthy of him : His Oaths violated ! His Probity wounded by an Action so mean, so inglorious ! His Friendship so inhumanly, so perfidiously betray'd ! All this join'd together, expos'd to his View an irreparable Breach in his unsully'd Honour. But then, instantly, the arbitrary, the irresistible, the impetuous Passion he had for the Dutches, stifled all those vain Scruples. He no longer look'd upon his Procedure as a Failing in his Obligation, his Duty ; but reckon'd it as the only Means of saving an amiable, a lovely Princess, who would not be otherwise un-deceiv'd : It was an Acknowledgment, a Debt of Gratitude due to the most tender, the most perfect Love : In a Word, it was a Secret which was to remain buried in the profoundest Silence : What ! mistrust the Dutches ! Who, alas ! is capable

pable of resisting Almighty Love, when it attacks a Heart with all its Power ? Of this the Duke soon became sensible by melancholy and fatal Experience.

In the Interim, VAUDRAY, surpriz'd at the Duke's riding out without his Retinue, contrary to his Custom, could not help conceiving some Umbrage thereat. Since the Confidence he had been forc'd to make him, he had been in perpetual Alarms ; for which Reason he, precipitately, mounted his Horse to find him out, who receiv'd him with as pleasant a Countenance as he had ever done before.

This Prince, having had Leisure to resettle his Mind, took the Way to return towards the Palace. His Conversation with VAUDRAY ran wholly upon the Turnament ; and the Duke said to him, so as not to be heard by any other, That he design'd to go in Person to Madame *de VERGI*, to prevail with her to embellish, with her Presence, a Festival, which, in Reality, was made merely upon her Account. These Discourses brought them into the Duke's Appartement, where they still had a farther Conference, while the Dutchesse was studying how to compleat what she had so successfully begun. The Idea of her approaching Vengeance fill'd her Heart with a malign Joy, and her

Confidante de LANTAGE, who participated in her Satisfaction, likewise flatter'd herself, that she shou'd soon see the fatal Effects.

The Duke, as amorous, and as tender as ever, repair'd that Evening to the Apartment of his Dutchesse, in order to pass the Night with her ; and it was in the most tender Moments of his Passion that this artful, pernicious Woman, pushing back her too weak Husband, said, ‘ Expect not from me either Tenderness or Sensibility ; I must have VAUDRAY’s Secret : Without that, in all its Circumstances, never more hope from me ought but a forc’d Duty, and even in that, I shall know how to retain myself. Speak, my Lord, continued she ; has your Heart got the better of those insignificant Scruples which lately attack’d it ? In a Word, are you determin’d ? Have you made a Choice ? Are you bent upon my Ruin, or will you enjoy my Affection ?

‘ Ah ! Madam, interrupted the easy Prince, mournfully ; You have triumph’d ! Can I hesitate between the two Extremes you mention ? I am going, then, since it must be so, to impart to you this important Secret : My blind Complaisance is about to fix an Eternal

‘ Eternal Blot upon my Memory. But,
 ‘ alas ! such is my Weakness ; such is the
 ‘ Ascendant you have over me ! Your
 ‘ Tears have unmann’d me ! But, Ma-
 ‘ dam, added he, with a Tone more se-
 ‘ vere, listen to the Conditions I annex
 ‘ to what I am about to reveal to you.
 ‘ Notwithstanding the Ardor with which
 ‘ you inspire my Soul, and the Violence
 ‘ of my Passion for you, I swear by the
 ‘ Living God, who is Witness of my Per-
 ‘ jury, that, upon the least Intelligence
 ‘ you ever give of this Secret, nothing
 ‘ shall protect you from my just Resent-
 ‘ ment. Think well on it, then, Madam,
 ‘ before you force me to break Silence ;
 ‘ examine the Danger to which your Im-
 ‘ prudence may expose you.

‘ I fear nothing, interrupted the Dutch-
 ‘ ess, hastily ; I will, inviolably, conceal
 ‘ this dangerous Secret of yours : It con-
 ‘ cerns me as much as it does yourself.’

‘ Since no Consideration can surmount
 ‘ your Positiveness, reply’d the Duke,
 ‘ hear, then, the whole History of VAU-
 ‘ DRAY : But, before I begin, I once more
 ‘ repeat, That if ever you divulge the
 ‘ least Syllable of it, you must expect my
 ‘ utmost Vengeance.

Having said this, the indiscreet Prince
 made her an ample Detail of all the Ad-
 ventures

ventures of his Favourite; without omitting any one Particular. Great God! What an Intelligence was this to the furious Dutchess! If the Darkness of the Night had not conceal'd her horrible Agitations of Soul, the Duke must, infallibly, have penetrated into the Motives of her importunate Curiosity: But as he took no Notice of it, he went on, and told her his going that Night to Madame *de VERGI*'s Castle, and all he had seen in the Bower.

‘ You see, said he, without giving her Time to interrupt him, that my Faith to you is preserv'd, to the utmost, and that my Protestations of Love are all real: But offer not to abuse my Goodness and Condescension. The Secret which I have imparted to you, is doubly sacred to me, both upon Account of my solemn Vows, and of the Part which my Niece has in this History.

‘ At length, Sir, reply'd she, you have eas'd my Heart, and dissipated my Alarms: I am now no longer apprehensive of losing a Treasure so justly my Due, for the Attachment I have for you. But how came it that you made such Hesitation to acquaint me with VAUDRAY's Correspondence with Madame *de VERGI*? It is impossible for you to have

have a greater Pleasure in their Union,
 than I have. I assure you, that I not
 only restore to that, your Favourite, all
 my former Esteem, but that, I will,
 likewise, as much as in me lies, contri-
 bute towards rendering the Festival
 which you are preparing, worthy the
 Sentiments I have for that deserving
 Pair. In the mean while, I wou'd not,
 by any Means, have you take the least
 Notice to VAUDRAY of your having
 let me into the Secret : He will, with-
 out doubt, think he has some Reason to
 complain ; nor is he, perhaps, so much
 as he ought to be, perswaded of my
 Candour and Discretion.

With these, and the like Discourses, the
 Dutches's knew, so artfully, how to mask
 the Fury which devour'd her, that the
 credulous Prince repented his having so
 long conceal'd from her Knowledge an Af-
 fair of which she seem'd so justly to ap-
 prove. But, alas ! he comprehended not
 upon what cruel Motives she interested
 herself therein : Had he been able to have
 read her Soul, he wou'd there have found
 Projects of the blackest Hue.

In Effect, the Duke had no sooner left
 her, but, going into her Closet, she caus'd
 Madame *de LANTAGE* to be call'd, and,
 with Vehemence, gave her a full Ac-
 count

count of the Important Discovery she had made. ‘ You see, said she, that I must for ever renounce the Hopes of touching the Heart of the ingrateful VAUDRAY ! Let us then, without Hesitation, abandon ourfelves to Rage and Despair ! I will, by the most terrible and remorseless Vengeance, sacrifice to my Resentment two detested Enemies, who destroy my Repose, by wounding it in a Part so sensible ! Let us begin with the perfidious VAUDRAY ! cry’d she : Let my Eyes, this very Day, be Witnesses of his Ruin ! Let him feel the deserv’d Reward of his Ingratitude ! ’

‘ If I might presume, Madam, to contradict you, answer’d the pernicious *Confidante*, I wou’d do myfelf the Honour to represent to your Highness, that by VAUDRAY’s Death, the principal Victim of your Vengeance wou’d escape ; Madame *de VERGI*, who wou’d readily penetrate into the Cause of his Loss, wou’d, infallibly, avoid the Effects of your Resentment : For which Reason, Madam, my Advice, since you have so long permitted me to offer it you, is, That you get both those Objects of your Hatred here together, and then sacrifice them both at once.

This

This Counsel so flatter'd the Fury of the relentless Dutches, that she determin'd to follow it, which, notwithstanding it wou'd retard her Designs, yet it made the inhumane Scheme she had laid, so much the more likely to succeed. She had, with this View, the Art so to disguise her Thoughts, that VAUDRAY, who carefully observ'd her, to read in her Eyes whether his Prince had betray'd him, cou'd not discover in her Looks the least Alteration.

In the mean while, the Time appointed for the Tournament approach'd ; and a great Number of Cavaliers, from all Parts, being already arriv'd at Court, the Duke, as he had promis'd VAUDRAY, went in Person to fetch Madame *de VERGR*, who, notwithstanding her Inclination for a retir'd Life, and her Repugnance to all Manner of Diversions, consented to attend that Prince, tho' with an Impression of Chagrin upon her Spirits, which seem'd to presage to her those Disasters which she cou'd not foresee. She appear'd at Court with those Charms which had always made her the Admiration of all who beheld her. The Dutches was most profuse of her Caresses ; but mortal Poison lay conceal'd under her perfidious Embraces : In Effect, she determin'd,

the

the Day following, to put in Execution the horrible Revenge which she had so long meditated.

The Duke, having, for that Day, appointed a pompous Cavalcade to go to one of his Pleasure-Houses, whither he was to be accompany'd by the whole Court, a magnificent Collation was there prepar'd against his coming. The Collation was to be preceded by Fishing, at which, the Ladies, dress'd like *Nereides*, and the Cavaliers, like *Sea-Gods*, were to engage in an innocent War against the Fishes of the Canals, with which the Neighbourhood of that delightful House was embellish'd.

On the other Side, the Dutchesse had caus'd to be prepar'd, in one of the Courts of the Palace, some beautiful Fire-works, which were to be follow'd by an excellent Concert of Musick, and the Representation of a fine Pastoral was to crown the Delights of that Day, dedicated to Pleasure.

These Things were all partly executed. Nothing cou'd be more gallant, or more magnificent, than all that pass'd at the Duke's Pleasure-House; the Honour of all was paid to Madame *de VERGI*, and she never appear'd more lovely than upon that Occasion.

At the Duke's Return, the Fire-works were, in every Respect, answerable to Expectation, and presented to that numerous and illustrious Company the most agreeable Spectacle imaginable ; after which, according to the Design which had been laid, the Duke conducted the Ladies into the Dutches's Appartment, where they were to have the Honour of supping with her Highness.

After this, that Prince pass'd into his own Hall, accompany'd by all the Cavaliers who were present at that Festival. He there gave them a most splendid Entertainment, at which, Care had been taken to prepare, with Profusion, the most exquisite Dainties that a nice and luxurious Appetite cou'd desire.

That which the Dutches gave in her own Appartment, was nothing less delicate, nor any wise inferior in Magnificence ; that Princess deporting herself, upon that Occasion, with an affected Gaity, and Disengagement of Thought, of which she alone could have been capable.

In Fine, the Entertainment was no sooner over, but, while Things were getting ready for the Pastoral, as a farther Token of her good Humour, and to execute her hellish Design, she wou'd needs entertain the numerous Assembly of Ladies.

dies who surrounded her, with the Recital of a new and gallant History, which, she told them, she had lately heard : But, before she began it, this detested Woman presented to Madame *de VERGI* an envenom'd Nosegay, under Pretext of making her Queen of that Feast ; after which, under borrow'd Names, she recited the whole Adventure of that unhappy Princess, without forgetting the most minute Circumstance, even not the innocent Artifice of the little Spaniel.

Then, this malignant Woman, addressing herself to the unfortunate LAURA, (who during that Recital had all the Difficulty in the World to contain herself.)

' Is it not true, said she, that there is
 ' something in the Passion of these two
 ' Lovers of a very singular Character, and
 ' that a Lady, capable of a Love so im-
 ' plicit and disinterested, deserv'd not the
 ' Perfidy of that Traytor, who divulg'd
 ' a Secret which ought to have been
 ' dearer to him than his Life ? But he
 ' cou'd not refuse this Sacrifice to the
 ' new Mistress, whom he at present a-
 ' dores.

' Madam, reply'd the confus'd LAURA,
 ' that Lover has certainly committed an
 ' Action very ungenerous : But this new
 ' Mistress of his, whom you mention, it
 ' may

' may be presum'd, has paid for that Sacrifice with all her Innocence.' The Dutchesse, satisfy'd with her Vengeance, would not make any Reply to a Thing, of the whole Force whereof she was fully sensible. She chang'd the Subject, and thereby gave the disconsolate Countess the Liberty of retiring to her own Apartment, there to give Vent to a Grief which she cou'd no longer contain.

While this pass'd in the Dutchesse's Apartment, the Duke, after Supper, read aloud to his Courtiers, some important News from the Court of *France*, which, that same Afternoon, he had receiv'd by an Express, sent on Purpose to him, by PHILIP AUGUSTUS.

When he had done reading, and every one was discoursing concerning the Contents of that Packet, the Duke was preparing to rejoin the Ladies, when, recollecting himself, that VAUDRAY had receiv'd by the same Courier, the Detail of an Affair of the greatest Moment, of which he had order'd him to inform himself, he immediately sent to call him. He was but just gone; and, upon his Appearance, that Prinee demanded to see the Letter he had receiv'd: But as Fortune, to detect and punish Wickedness, sometimes makes Use of unforeseen Accidents, so it then

then happen'd, that VAUDRAY, endeavouring, instantly, to obey the Command of his Prince, and being in some Confusion upon Account of a Letter which Madam *de LANTAGE* had deliver'd to him just before, and which he had not yet had the Time to peruse, made a strange Mistake, delivering to the Duke the Letter which was sent him by the Dutches, instead of that which he demanded ; after which, seiz'd with a secret Uneasiness, which he was not able to resist, he hastily withdrew, and went where the Dutches and the rest of the Ladies were ; but not finding LAURA there, he ran to her Appartement.

The Duke, during this, drew near to the Lights, in order to inform himself of what he desir'd to know : But, Heavens ! How inexpressible was his Surprize, when, having broke open the fatal Paper which VAUDRAY had put into his Hand, he knew the Dutches's Writing, and found these Words.

I Have done all Things, ingrateful Traytor, to make myself belov'd by thee : I have not neglected any Thing to make myself fear'd by thee : Thou hast resisted all these different Motions. Learn, then, this Day, what they have forc'd me to do.

I triumph, VAUDRAY, and my Rival sinks under my Vengeance. I have known how to join with the subtil Poison, which consumes her, the Horror of believing thee perfidious. There would be still something wanting to the Sweetness of my Revenge, if I should leave thee ignorant of the Means by which I accomplish'd my Ends. I impos'd on the Duke's Credulity: This is not all; I had the Address, by feigning myself with Child, to force my weak, unworthy Husband, to become perjur'd. Neither of the Three has wherewithal to reproach the Others. And now, to crown all the rest, I have nothing more to desire, than to behold thee dying with Grief at the Sight of my expiring Rival.

Who can express the Horror, the Consternation, with which that Prince was seiz'd at the reading of this Letter! A deadly Chilliness thrill'd thro' all his Veins, and, for some Time, render'd him wholly Motionless. But, at length, the Extremity Madame de VERGI was in, re-animated his Faculties. He sent, with Speed, to inquire whether she was still with the Dutches; and Word being brought him, that she was gone to her own Appartement, with Tokens of Indisposition in her Countenance, he flew thither, forbidding
that

that any one shou'd follow him : But, O ye Powers ! What a doleful Scene of Woe was, there, presented to his View !

The beautiful, the matchless LAURA, extended on her Bed, with all the Symptoms of having but a few Moments to live : That rosy Complexion chang'd to a Lead-like Lividness, and those brilliant Eyes fix'd with a ghastly Glare, wou'd have melted the most remorseless Heart. This deplorable State, which, of all the Charms of that lovely Princess, had left nought but the Remembrance, together with the violent Agitations of her Body, gave evident Intelligence of the Manner of Death which was about to rob the World of its brightest Ornament.

The wretched VAUDRAY, lying on the Bed-side, by her, his Head resting upon one of her beautiful Hands, was pouring out the small Remainder of his Blood from a large Wound in his Breast, which seem'd to suffer him to live only just so long as his dear, and faithful Princess should continue breathing.

At this shocking Spectacle, the Duke, already scarce himself, sunk under so many redoubled Afflictions ; and letting himself fall into a Great Chair, he, with Horror, contemplated upon this tragick Event : His Heart was so seiz'd with Consternation,

sternation, that his Tongue had not the Power to express his Sentiments.

But VAUDRAY, looking on him with a dying Eye ; ‘ Behold here, my Lord,’ said he, with a feeble Voice, the cruel ‘ Fruit of my Obedience to your Commands, and of my Care to conceal from my divine LAURA the unworthy Passion of the Dutchesse ! My Destiny is just and equitable : I merit it : But, Great God ! Must my Death be accompany’d with Despair ? I die suspected of the blackest Perfidy ; and to finish the Course of my wretched Life, I drag after me to the Grave the most perfect, the most finish’d of all Nature’s Works ! ’ Having said these Words, that true and faithful Lover expir’d.

‘ Oh ! stay yet a Moment, my dearest VAUDRAY, feebly, cry’d the dying LAURA ; our inhumane Enemy shall not enjoy a compleat Triumph, since I die convinc’d of thy Fidelity, and perswaded, that the disastrous Fate which hurries us both to Eternity, is an Effect of thy Virtue.’

These were the last Words she was able to pronounce, and immediately after, Death united for ever those two Lovers, whose Merit and Fidelity deserv’d a better Destiny.

‘ Oh,

‘ Oh, Death ! cry’d the Duke, transported with Fury ; Thou must have yet another Victim ! Amiable, tender Lovers, whom I, with my own Hands, have precipitated to the Grave, I go to revenge your Wrongs ! ’ He had no sooner utter’d this, but, snatching up the Poniard, still reeking with the Blood of the unfortunate VAUDRAY, he ran to the Hall, where the Dutchesse was sitting amidst the whole Court, and there, in a Transport of Rage, which quite depriv’d him of his Reason, he, remorselessly, plung’d the fatal Steel thrice into her Breast, saying, ‘ Take, Traitoreſſ, the just Punishment of the enormous Crimes in which thou haſt unhappily made me an Accomplice ! ’

After this, his Rage still increasing, he was about to attempt upon his own Life, had not the Noblemen, who were there present at the Action, interpos’d, and forcibly wrench’d from him the destructive Weapon which so lately had been fatal both to Virtue and its Opposite.

He was carry’d to his Appartement, where his Attendants were oblig’d to observe him, ’till ſuch Time as Reafon and Religion had ſomewhat appeas’d the impetuous Transports of his Soul.

When

When the Passions of this unhappy Prince were somewhat calm'd, he thought himself under an Obligation to justify his Proceeding to his Subjects, and therefore made a publick Recital of the unfortunate History of those faithful Lovers, and of the detestable Passion of the Dutches, which had been the Cause of that so horrible a Catastrophe ; and, agreeable to the Integrity of his natural Disposition, and the Soundness of his Morals, he impos'd on himself a severe Penance, which he render'd authentick, by resigning his Sovereignty and Dominions to the Count *d'ALBON*, his Brother, and resolving to go to the *Holy-Land* : But, before his Departure, he would needs join together, in one magnificent Monument, the precious Remains of those two Lovers, who, when living, had been so dear to him. To *RAOUL de VAUDRAY*, he gave all the Establishments which had belong'd to his unhappy Brother. As for Madame *de LANTAGE*, she ended her Days in a Cloister, repenting of her Sins.

The END.



**THE
INHUMANE
HUSBAND.**





T H E

Inhuman Husband.


URIN, the Metropolis of Piedmont, the ancient Court of the Dukes of Savoy, and the ordinary Residence of his present Sardinian Majesty, about the Midst of the last Century, gave Birth to the virtuous and beautiful, tho' unfortunate, AMELIA. She was sole Heiress to an opulent Citizen, who ow'd his Descent to one of the most considerable Families in the whole Principality, and was the Darling of her aged Parents, who had refus'd several very advantageous Matches, which had been propos'd to them, as not being able to bear the Thoughts of parting with their dear Daughter, whose

Budding Beauties attracted the Eyes of all who saw her. But the Importunities of FABRICIO, a promising young Nobleman, of the first Quality, were not to be resisted : And being accordingly espous'd to the incomparable Lady, for the first three or four Years, they liv'd in a perfect Harmony, FABRICIO expressing a most passionate Fondness for the lovely AMELIA ; nor was she backwards in grateful Returns : And indeed, barring a somewhat too warm Inclination to Gaming, FABRICIO's Morals, and Manner of Proceeding, seem'd irreproachable.

He had, for several Years before his Marriage, constantly pass'd the Carnival at *Venice*, where that Festival is observ'd with much greater Splendor and Magnificence, than in any other Part of *Europe* ; nor was he known ever to have miss'd going thither about that Time, where he generally stay'd seven or eight Weeks ; yet AMELIA never took the least Umbrage at his so doing, any farther than repining for the Want of his Company.

As he was Master of a large Fortune, gam'd high, and was not always unfortunate, he made a very considerable Figure, and

and his Conversation was courted by many of the chief Nobility of *Venice*, and others of the best Fashion.

Unhappily, a certain Senator, of a worthy Character, tho' not very wealthy, became extremely fond of our young *Piemontese*, and had contracted such an Intimacy with him, that he was never so easy, or well-pleas'd, as when he cou'd get him to dine, or pass the Evening at his Palace.

This hospitable Nobleman had a Daughter, a young Lady of most exquisite Beauty and Endowments, call'd **LEONARDA**; with whom **FABRICIO** (who had all along carefully conceal'd his being married) became every Day more enamour'd; and, as she appear'd in his Eyes the most finish'd Beauty he had ever beheld, he soon found he was not Master enough of himself to prevent his Heart from falling a Victim to her Charms: Insomuch, that, wholly regardless of the sacred Ties under which he was engag'd, he intirely abandon'd himself to his growing Passion for the lovely **LEONARDA**.

As for the young Lady, her Judgment was too penetrating not to perceive the

Flame she had kindled in his Breast ; nor was it long before he had some Reason to flatter himself, that he was not wholly indifferent to her.

He met with no severe Checks, or Repulses, for the tender Expressions he made to her ; and it was with the greater Pleasure that she admitted his Addresses, and gave Ear to what his amorous Disposition dictated, because she was very well assur'd of his being, by Extraction, no wise inferior to herself, and possess'd of a plentiful Inheritance ; little dreaming of the previous Right Marriage had given the virtuous AMELIA, both to his Person and Affections ; nor did he omit daily to give the most solemn Assurances, both to herself, and her Relations and Acquaintance, of his Passion for LEONARDA, and his firm Resolution to devote himself to her lawful Embraces ; declaring, that nothing delay'd the Consummation of his Happiness, but the unavoidable waiting 'till some certain Affairs, of the last Importance, were settled, and brought to a Conclusion.

In the mean while his own Lady, uneasy and impatient at his unusual Stay at Venice, incessantly plied him with pressing

Let-

Letters, to return, expressing great Apprehensions of some Misfortune that had befallen him ; having, as yet, no Suspicion of his Infidelity. She wrote in Terms so passionately tender, that, had he been less prepossess'd than he was, her Letters cou'd not, possibly, have fail'd of making a due Impression on him.

His Answers were kind, still feigning urgent Business, that debarr'd him the Happiness of her Company ; and in this Manner he put her off for a Twelve-month ; and it is probable, that he wou'd never have thought of quitting *Venice*, where was the sole Object of all his present Vows, had not the impatient **AME-LIA**, inconsolable at so unkind an Absence, made it her daily Business to inquire of every one that came from thence, concerning his Conduct, whereby she got Information, from several credible Persons, of what gave her mortal Pangs.

FABRICIO's Love for his adored **LEONARDA**, was too vehement to suffer him to keep it a Secret ; and, as his Acquaintance in that City was, in a manner, universal, it was no difficult Matter for her to learn the Particulars of an Amour, which was manag'd with so little Precau-

tion; especially, as it was usual with him to declare publickly, in all Company, that he design'd to marry the Lady to whom he made his Addresses, and settle with her at *Venice*, as soon as ever the Situation of his Affairs wou'd permit.

This News was such a Shock to the injur'd AMELIA, that it almost depriv'd her of her Senses, and, in the Height of her Resentment and Despair, she writ a long Letter to her faithless Husband, reproaching him with his Baseness, and solemnly protesting, ‘ That if he was not at *Turin* within ten Days, she wou'd infallibly be with him at *Venice*, in a very short Time after, in order to abuse the Family he had impos'd on, and put a Stop to the Course of so base and infamous a Procedure as that to which he had abandon'd himself, and which was an Injury that she wou'd never suffer.’

Soon after he had receiv'd this unwelcome Letter, he chanc'd to drop it out of his Pocket, in his Mistress's Appartment. The Sight of it rais'd her Curiosity, and, watching an Opportunity, she took it up, unperceiv'd.

When

When her Lover had taken his Leave of her, she open'd it, with an Agitation and Concern which seem'd to foretel her the Contents. Her Amazement and Indignation were beyond Expression, when, upon her perusing those fatal Lines, she was thoroughly convinc'd of her Misfortune: For, at that very Instant, and only then, it was, that she began to feel that she lov'd him in good Earnest.

She us'd her utmost Efforts to prevail with her Heart to detest a Man who had so basely deceiv'd her; but, base and perfidious as he was, he had already taken such an absolute Possession of her Heart, that she found it extremely difficult to banish his Idea from thence. But, at length, after many violent Struggles, Reason got the Mastery, and opening her Eyes, with Horror and Resentment she beheld the Precipice from whence her treacherous Lover was preparing to hurry her: Insomuch, that the next Time he came to visit her, she reproach'd him with his villainous Attempt upon her, in such mortifying Terms, that, like one Planet-struck, he remain'd utterly confounded and motionless; and, at the same Juncture, throwing him his Lady's Letter, she forbad him her Presence, and,

and, as she left him, solemnly vow'd, never to see his Face again, if she cou'd possibly avoid it.

This little-expected Shock so stupified his Faculties, that he scarce knew where he was. At last, somewhat recovering from his Lethargy, he went home; but so overwhelm'd with Passion and Despair, that, entring into his Appartement, his Rage was so excessively vehement, that he certainly wou'd have laid violent Hands on himself, had it not been for some of his Acquaintance, who, observing his Disorder, follow'd him in, and prevented his doing himself any Mischief, and prevail'd with him to become somewhat more moderate.

In the mean while, the baffled LEONARDA, in order to deprive him of all farther Hopes of getting into her Company, retir'd into a Convent; which gave the finishing Stroke to his Despair.

But, in a Day or two after, having receiv'd fresh Letters from Turin, whereby he was assur'd, that the too-much-abus'd AMELIA was actually preparing to set out for Venice, positively determin'd there to say and do all that an injur'd, jea-

jealous Woman was capable of, when she found herself slighted and abandon'd by an ingrateful Husband ; he thought the most prudent Method he cou'd take, was to endeavour to divert that Storm which so apparently threaten'd him.

As there was no longer staying for him at *Venice*, he pack'd up his Baggage, and return'd to *Turin* ; where being arriv'd, his good Lady receiv'd him in so obliging a Manner, and even with such Transports of Joy, as plainly demonstrated, that, at the Moment she beheld him, she intirely forgot all the just Causes of Complaint she had against him, never upbraiding him with his late unworthy Conduct, or, indeed, scarce ever mentioning any thing of it to him ; and whenever she did, it was in a very mild and jocose Manner, by Way of Jest.

Both her Relations, and his, were daily making Entertainments, to welcome him Home ; and the whole Court, who had Intelligence of what had been transacted at *Venice*, admir'd at the kind Reception which the virtuous *AMELIA* gave to a Person who so little merited any Favour at her Hands, bestowing on her all the Praises her exemplary Goodness deserv'd.

Eight Months pass'd in a perfect Harmony, by which Time she began to appear pretty far gone with Child, and her Husband was seemingly fonder of her than ever.

One Evening, as he was sitting with her in their Bed-Chamber, he suddenly started up, saying, he was going to retire into his Closet to his Devotions, and, at the same time, advis'd her to do the like ; she readily did as he desir'd her, thanking him for putting her in Mind of what she ought to have remember'd of her own Accord, and more especially, as she said, in the Condition she was then in.

This pass'd ; and the very next Morning, chancing to awake sooner than ordinary, she was under no small Surprize at the missing her Husband : But she was much more astonish'd, when, a few Moments after, she saw him coming from his Closet, bearing in his Arms all those Materials us'd at the Funerals of Persons of Distinction.

Somewhat disorder'd and confus'd, she ask'd him the Meaning of what she thought so extraordinary, and to what Use he intended to put those Things ?

That

That thou wilt be sensible of, reply'd he,
his Eyes sparkling with Fury ; Know,
Wretch, that they all belong to thee : I
have prepar'd them for thee, and for none
else. This is the Time I have fix'd upon
to take a direful Vengeance on thee for all
the Sufferings I have undergone, and where-
of thou hast been the only Cause ; and
these are the Wax Tapers which are to sur-
round thy Bed, as soon as I have sacrific'd
thee to that Loss which thou hast occasion'd
by thy detestable Jealousy.

Scarce had he utter'd these Words, but
 the unhappy Lady sprang from her Bed,
 and, confounded, pale and trembling, cast
 herself at his Feet, and melting into
 Floods of Tears, a Sight moving enough
 to have rais'd Compassion in a Tiger ;
Alas ! said she, Pardon, my dearest Lord,
I beseech you, whatever I may, unadvisedly,
have said or done to offend you. It was
Excess of Love that made me impatient
of your Absence, and occasion'd my pro-
ceeding more violently than otherwise I
should have done. Take not away, I con-
jure you, a Life, which I have no other
Desire of prolonging, than to render it ser-
viceable to you, to the utmost of my Ca-
pacity, and to continue in the same Fide-
lity to you as I have hitherto done, with-
out

out once violating it, even in Thought. But, still, in case the Resentment you harbour in your Breast against me, is so implacable, that it cannot be appeas'd by any thing less than my Blood, I beg you to take it into your Consideration, that you are about destroying your innocent Infant, in whose Power it has never been to cause you the least Displeasure.

No ! no ! thou basest of Women, cry'd out this unnatural Monster, I am past Consideration : This Moment puts an End to thy detested Life : When, extending his butcherly Arm, he was just preparing to plunge it into her beautiful, faultless Bosom ; but, at that Time, a sudden Thundering at the Chamber-Door prevented him. He hastily went to open it, when, instantly, a young Damsel, the poor Lady's Waiting-Woman, rush'd in, and ran to embrace her trembling Mistress, resolutely telling the inhumane Executioner, who stood with his murdering Hand arm'd with a Weapon more becoming a Ruffian, than a Nobleman, That he should first dispatch her, before he should offer the least Violence to her dear Lady.

This generous Servant, whose Apartment was separated from that of her Lady,

dy, by only a single Wainscot, had been an Ear-Witness to most of what had pass'd, and, at all Hazards, determin'd to lend her Mistress what Assistance she was able. But this worse than Savage, darting a terrible Look at her, *Well, then, rash, fool-hardy Wretch,* cry'd he, foaming with Rage, *First take what you you yourself urge me to give you, and then bear Witness of the Sacrifice I shall, next, make of this jealous Woman, who is far more deserving of it than you.* At these Words, he stabb'd the undaunted young Damsel into the Body, who instantly dropp'd down at his Feet.

As he imagin'd her Business to have been done, he attempted not to second his Blow, but, Demon-like, hurry'd on by his damnable Fury, he flew to the poor terrify'd and prostrate Lady, and most inhumanely butcher'd her, by giving her many repeated Stabs.

When this execrable Assassine had committed so inhumane a Deed, he took up the mangled Body of his murder'd Lady, and re-conveying it into the Bed, he cover'd it all over with a Burial-Pall; and then, having lighted up a considerable Number of Wax-Tapers, (all which Things,

Things, as has been observ'd, he had got ready at Hand) he withdrew, cool and unconcern'd, into his Cabinet, where, with the same butcherly Hand with which he had just before so impiously assassinated an innocent Maid, and his own virtuous Wife, who was so well-deserving of a happier Destiny, he wrote a Billet to her Father and Mother, pressing them, without a Moment's Delay, to hasten immediately to his House, upon an Affair of the greatest Consequence. Such pressing Terms brought them even sooner than he could well have expected: When this audacious and unparallel'd Monster, receiving them with a Countenance full of Guilt mix'd with a strange Indifferency, conducted them up to the Place where this lamentable Scene of Horror had been transacted, and throwing off the Velvet Covering, from the still warm Corps, with an amazing Infolence, advis'd them to take Care of their Daughter's Funeral.

The distracted Mother, quite bereav'd of her Senses at the Sight of so moving, and so unexpected an Object, with Outcries which pierc'd the very Skies, threw herself upon her dear Daughter's Body, from whose Wounds Rivulets of Blood were yet streaming, and utter'd such dolorous

Ibrous Lamentations, as extorted Tears from the Eyes of all those whom her Cries had brought thither to be Beholders of so deplorable a Tragedy.

As for the disconsolate Father, he cou'd not utter a Syllable, having lost his Faculty of Speech with the shocking Surprise of this sorrowful Spectacle, and all he was capable of doing, was, to wound his venerable Countenance with his Nails, and to tear off his hoary Locks by Handfuls, 'till, thro' Excess of Grief, he, at last, fell down in a Swoon, from which it was not without extreme Difficulty that he was brought to himself.

Amidst all this Confusion, some of the By-standers thought of sending for a Surgeon, to try, if it was possible, to save the poor Damsel, who had so generously hazarded her own Life in attempting to preserve her Lady, and who still lay weltering in her Blood, upon the Floor: But their Endeavours were all ineffectual, for, in a few Hours, she expir'd, having first given the Particulars of this dismal Catastrophe, she being the only Person in the Family who had the least Knowledge of it, till they were all alarm'd by the Shrieks of the Mother of the poor murder'd

der'd Lady, for, otherwise, the unworthy Perpetrator of this Mischief could not have had Leisure to put Things in such Order as they were found ; and as for the wounded Damsel, tho' she saw all, it would have been to little Purpose for her to have attempted to have call'd out for Assistance, even had she been able.

As for the Murderer, the Surprize and Confusion was too great for any-body to mind what became of him ; and when, at last, they began to think of him, it was too late. He had so order'd his Matters to prevent his being apprehended, that he soon got out of Reach, and arriv'd safe at *Venice*. He had flatter'd himself with the Hopes there to put an End to all his Unhappiness, in the Arms of **LEONARDA**, upon whose Account, and for whose Sake, he had committed such an infamous and bloody Piece of Villany. At his Arrival there, she was at her Father's Country Seat, preparing to come to Town : But the News of this detestable Action soon spreading abroad, it reach'd her Ears just as she was setting out for *Venice*.

The Thoughts of her having been the Occasion (tho' innocent) of that deplorable Fact, struck her with such Horror, that

that she immediately took a fix'd Resolution of quitting the World ; and, notwithstanding all the Arguments us'd by her Relations, and others, in order to dissuade her, she soon after retir'd into a Convent for the rest of her Days.

Her impious, inhumane Lover, unable to support himself under this last Shock, the most insupportable he had ever yet met with, made all possible Interest only to obtain a Sight of her ; but being absolutely refus'd, he left *Venice*, overwhelm'd with Despair ; and now, utterly out of Conceit with Life, he wish'd for nothing but Death ; and, tho' he wanted Courage to end his present Misery with his own Hands, yet it was not long before he met a deserv'd Fate, being assassinated by a Troop of *Miquelets*, as he was passing through *Catalonia*, in his Way to *Madrid*.

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